











**RED HAIR AND BLUE SEA**



# RED HAIR AND BLUE SEA

BY  
STANLEY R. OSBORN



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TO  
MY MOTHER



# CONTENTS

## *PART ONE*

### THE RAINBOW AND THE CLOUD

| CHAPTER                                   | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| I. HAND OF THE GENII . . . . .            | 3    |
| II. PALMYRA PIPES ALL HANDS . . . . .     | 7    |
| III. NIGHT, AND A FACE . . . . .          | 15   |
| IV. A PIRATE SENDS IN HIS CARD . . . . .  | 24   |
| V. PALM TREE AND OLIVE . . . . .          | 30   |
| VI. OLIVE ASKS AND PONAPÉ BASKS . . . . . | 40   |
| VII. PIRATES ARE CHRISTENED . . . . .     | 47   |
| VIII. ENEMIES—AND FRIENDS . . . . .       | 52   |
| IX. UNCHRISTIAN SCIENCE . . . . .         | 59   |
| X. ISLANDS COME AND PIRATES GO . . . . .  | 66   |
| XI. AT THE RAINBOW'S END . . . . .        | 72   |

## *PART TWO*

### THE PIGEON OF NOAH

|                                        |    |
|----------------------------------------|----|
| XII. THE WEAK AND THE STRONG . . . . . | 79 |
| XIII. A WAIL AND A SAIL . . . . .      | 87 |

| CHAPTER                                                   | PAGE |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------|
| XIV. THE PIGEON OF NOAH . . . . .                         | 93   |
| XV. "TWO BY TWO" . . . . .                                | 101  |
| XVI. VAN DESPAIRS AND JOHN PREPARES                       | 109  |
| XVII. EMPRESS "PALM THE PAGAN" . . .                      | 116  |
| XVIII. HEATHEN HAIR . . . . .                             | 126  |
| XIX. WHITE SAVAGE OR BROWN . . . .                        | 133  |
| XX. THE DELUGE . . . . .                                  | 140  |
| XXI. LEER OF FEAR . . . . .                               | 150  |
| XXII. PALMYRA DOES NOT "SIT AND THINK<br>o' ME" . . . . . | 159  |

### PART THREE

#### THE EMPTY MILLION MILES

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| XXIII. THE SAVAGE . . . . .           | 167 |
| XXIV. THE BIRD AND THE WORD . . . .   | 174 |
| XXV. DEVIL AND DEEP SEA. . . . .      | 179 |
| XXVI. THE TENTH PARADISE, OR—— . . .  | 186 |
| XXVII. THREE WAYS FROM DEATH . . . .  | 191 |
| XXVIII. INDECISION AN AGONY . . . . . | 197 |
| XXIX. THE EMPTY MILLION MILES . . . . | 206 |

# CONTENTS

ix

| CHAPTER  |                                       | PAGE |
|----------|---------------------------------------|------|
| XXX.     | TWO IN A CANOE . . . . .              | 213  |
| XXXI.    | A SCAR AND A SCARE . . . . .          | 220  |
| XXXII.   | EYES OF THE SEA . . . . .             | 228  |
| XXXIII.  | PALMYRA REBELS . . . . .              | 235  |
| XXXIV.   | FIRE—AND SMOKE . . . . .              | 243  |
| XXXV.    | A MESSAGE IS DELIVERED . . . . .      | 250  |
| XXXVI.   | THE LAST HOPE . . . . .               | 255  |
| XXXVII.  | REALIZATION . . . . .                 | 260  |
| XXXVIII. | ETERNITY GROWS OLD . . . . .          | 269  |
| XXXIX.   | BETWEEN PONAPÉ AND THE REEF . . . . . | 277  |
| XL.      | THY PEOPLE MY PEOPLE . . . . .        | 284  |

## PART FOUR

### WHEN FOUR MEN LOVE

|        |                                  |     |
|--------|----------------------------------|-----|
| XLI.   | TO SLEEP AND TO TALK . . . . .   | 291 |
| XLII.  | PRIDE OR COMPASSION? . . . . .   | 299 |
| XLIII. | BLACK SHADOW OF PONAPÉ . . . . . | 305 |
| XLIV.  | A MAT AND A NET . . . . .        | 310 |
| XLV.   | ROUSE THE BEACH! . . . . .       | 318 |
| XLVI.  | WHILE MOMENTS COUNT . . . . .    | 323 |



| CHAPTER                                   | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------|------|
| XLVII. A RIDE AND A WALK . . . . .        | 329  |
| XLVIII. AGAIN—TANNA. . . . .              | 336  |
| XLIX. OLIVE TIRES OF WAITING . . . . .    | 344  |
| L. ROAST PORK, WELL DONE . . . . .        | 352  |
| LI. EVIL HOUR OF PONAPÉ'S POWER . . . . . | 357  |
| LII. JOHN TIRES OF WAITING . . . . .      | 363  |
| LIII. BETTER MAN, BEST MAN . . . . .      | 371  |

PART ONE

THE RAINBOW AND THE CLOUD



## CHAPTER I

### HAND OF THE GENII

WHEN the square sun-browned hand with the lace mitt upon it was thrust from the outer darkness in through the port of her cabin aboard the yacht Rainbow, Miss Palmyra Tree had been lying, for sometime, with eyes closed.

As the chill air of the California coast had come puffing into the port over her berth, the girl had shivered and reached for the coverlet. When she did so, a ray from the cabin light, weaving back and forth, struck in a prismatic refraction upon the bevel of a small mirror. She picked up the glass and snuggled down under her covers.

As she lay, her lithe young body moving a little from side to side with the motion of the vessel, Palmyra regarded herself intimately. She looked into the friendly blue eyes that gazed back at her from the depths of their velvety black pupils.

Her thought turned to Van Buren Rutger and John Thurston, at this moment above decks. Were they really truly in love with those eyes, that face? Was it then such a face to be desired, to be yearned for, to be possessed?

A little wave of color mounted to throat and cheeks and brow.

Presently, however, she tossed the mirror aside. Ah, but this was a business, this falling in love. Why did young men have to fall in love and make so

much bother? And as for a girl—was *she* in love with one man, or just dandy good pals with two?

It was now that she closed her eyes and lay for a long while, considering the matter. The Rainbow rocked her as in a cradle. From the woodwork came a note, pleasantly rhythmical, as a drowsy insect heard afar in the gloaming. The water alongside sang a lullaby: kerchugg, swishety-swash-swish; kerchugg, swishety-swash-swish.

And then, when she opened her eyes at last, it was to discover the sinewy sun-browned hand with the black lace mitt upon it. The hand had come thrusting in from outside the yacht. The girl became aware only just in time to see it raised, seemingly in benediction. For an instant the hand remained thus. Then it receded, grasped the lower edge of the opening as if supporting a body, let go and disappeared.

Had the cabin looked from a superstructure she would not have been startled. Anyone passing by along the deck might have been thrown out of balance by a plunge of the yacht. A hand raised to steady one against the deckhouse could easily thrust through the hole exactly so; in and up. But the cabin was *not* in a deckhouse. The port opened in the side of the hull. Beyond, below, there was—nothing.

Hence, the girl would have sprung up to investigate, but a pitch of the Rainbow threw her back. When she did get her face into range, no one was visible. The port being to lee, she gazed directly down at the water. Foam flecked, it swept under the points of light and then, with something the

sinister implication of a millrace, on into the dark astern.

The young woman tried to look forward, aft. But the opening was too small. Seizing the mirror she put it out, turned it to right and left. Above the green sea that licked along the yacht's length, its side rose—white, smooth, without foothold. And nowhere, clinging to vessel or struggling in water, was anyone to be seen.

The girl sat back, seriously disturbed. Her first thought had been that a seaman was overside on some dangerous duty, that he was swept away. She would have given the alarm. But she had restrained herself on a positive perception that the hand was not torn from its grasp. It had deliberately let go. And there had been no cry.

The Rainbow was by now too far off shore for boats, and no other explanation occurred. The fact remained that Miss Tree had lost but a moment in getting up to the port, and found nothing. The hand *had* deliberately let go and there was absolutely no sound.

The girl laughed uncertainly in a growing appreciation of this last circumstance. The apparition had been silent as a ghost. Was it really a hand at all, or only a dream? It seemed very real, but she'd had only an instant. . . .

Again Palmyra laughed; this time in musical mirth. Until now she had somehow failed to do justice to the absurdity of that black lace mitt upon the big square paw. Fear for a man in danger had dominated her thought. But now at last the lace in all its comic discordance. She wasn't conscious of falling



asleep, but only in dreams did sailors wear upon their calloused hands the finical adornments of great-grandmother's day.

Yes, when one thought it over, the whole vision had borne that exaggerated impressiveness common to dreams. As she opened her eyes the hand appeared to be rising above her in a gesture, solemn, warning: a something of ineffable portent.

Palmyra shivered once again in the chill air. She slammed shut the port. Then she dived back into her covers; drew them up to her chin.

"Oh, all right; *all right!*" she commented. "Aladdin happened to rub a ring. Me, it's a mirror. If you're the slave of the glass, Mr. Hand, take my problem upon your shoulders—I suppose you do have shoulders?—and work it out. I'm sure I can't. O Slave of the Mirror, do your duty."

Saying which, she closed her eyes without any sense of foreboding and did not open them, this time, until daylight.

## CHAPTER II

### PALMYRA PIPES ALL HANDS

WITH the chiming of five bells of the morning watch—half past six o'clock—the girl awoke to a serious mood.

*Why this voyage?*

She could not doubt it had, in some way, to do with Van Buren Rutger, John Thurston. For she had seen a great deal of those two while the family, from Boston, had been in Southern California.

When Mrs. Crawford and the Wampold sisters and Dennis McCarthy and Constance Crawford had come idling up the coast in the *Rainbow*, the girl had not suspected. But five days later her parents were bundling her aboard—without any explanation that explained—and the family was bound, at least for Honolulu, perhaps even Japan. Had Van alone been asked as a fellow voyager she would have understood. But with John also here, she was at a loss.

Until now it had never occurred to her to turn the light of introspection upon her sentiments. At nineteen you waste few of the precious hours on self-analysis. But now she was surprised, somewhat conscience-stricken, to realize that not once, until the last day or so, had she thought definitely about herself and these two men.

She was inclined to look upon this yachting as indelicate, brutal; penning her up, as on a stage, to play for them all an endless triangle of courtship.

As if in protest there rose from the main cabin the earnest voice of John Thurston, followed by the gay laugh of Van Buren Rutger. Before her the strong interesting face of Thurston formed itself. What a splendid quality of brain and will and courage; to have forced oneself up, at thirty, from nothing at all to recognition in one's profession. But shortly his features were replaced by the handsome highbred visage of his rival. Van, she defended, had done none of this because there was none to do. And her parents, in favoring him, had her happiness as their sole consideration.

Warned by the voices that it was time to dress, Palmyra jumped out. And only now, when her glance happened again upon the mirror, did she think of her genii. With a laugh, she picked the reflector up.

"Slave of the Mirror," she declaimed, "do I happen to be in love with any of the gentlemen present, or only . . ."

She gave the glass a vigorous rub.

"Slave—I desire your report. Come forth."

When the genii did not materialize she rubbed the mirror again, upon its face, its silver back, its handle. Then she flung it from her in mock chagrin. "Gone!" she cried. "O Despair—'twas a problem too much e'en for the gods."

She had dismissed the appearance as a dream, but it seemed so real now that when she had clothed herself she climbed upon the berth for another look through the port.

The sea, twinkling up at her in the morning sun, was no longer menacing. And the girl, bending

down to gaze out, became aware of a something on the polished metal of the opening that caused her to start back in surprise: the print of moist and dirty fingers.

She sat, astonished. The hand, then, had been no dream, but real flesh and blood? Yet who could have been overside at such an hour? And how could the staging he had stood upon be so instantly removed?

Palmyra had an unexpected sense of evil. She jumped down and hurried for the companionway to investigate.

On deck a chill wind raked the yacht, but the sun shone upon the snowy teakwood and burst into flickers of flame where the brasses moved. Seamen in warm navy blue that would soon change to cool navy white, were finishing their watch by swabbing down the deck. The yacht was making good weather, for she had been built for seaworthiness and comfort rather than speed.

The girl was only a moment in verifying her impression of the evening before. While from the planking it would have been possible for a man to reach down and grasp the frame of the port, there was absolutely no foothold. And a question revealed that no staging had been slung overside, and no seaman ordered to any such duty.

Palmyra was bewildered.

She shot a glance toward Captain Pedersen's hands. Big and square enough, heaven knew, but fiery red and flaxen bristled. At the wheel stood one Johannsen, his huge paws gripped on the spokes. A scarlet ballet girl danced, disqualify-

ingly, on the back of one and of the other the index finger was missing.

Presently seven bells came, with breakfast for the whole crew, so that she was able to scrutinize, not only the men who had been on deck, but also those of the watch below.

"But Captain Pedersen," she asked at last—the apparition of the cabin had seemed very dark skinned—haven't we still a Jap or a Mexican aboard, or maybe a colored chef?"

The sailing master shook his head.

Tietjens, the mate, had taken the wheel. With the first opportunity, she made over to him, began to discuss, guardedly, the sort of protection sailormen wore for their hands. But never had he seen anything remotely like what she described—black, openly-wrought, fingerless.

The girl hurried away to her cabin to make sure those prints had been real. The normality of everything on deck had quieted her alarm. She was glad now that some instinct had kept her from explaining. Of all on board, she alone knew.

Palmyra began to giggle in the most juvenile fashion. "Never before," thought she, "except in the theatre or between the covers of a book, have I come within hailing distance of adventure. But now, with the yacht scarcely out of sight of land, fascinating mystery makes its presence known."

And the entirely unexplainable lace mitt: a great big fist like a prize-fighter's all grannied up in silk. That added just the needed touch.

In the not remote past this girl had been a devoted reader of *Treasure Island*. And today, startled by

her sudden realization of responsibility in this new and adult problem of Van and John, she was in a mood to flee away back to those irresponsible days when buccaneering old Billy Bones of the Admiral Benbow was the most actual and awful being in existence.

So, as she jumped up on the berth again, she was demanding that pirates lurk aboard. "Yes, undoubtedly," she affirmed, "they've mistaken the yacht for a treasure seeker."

As she examined the marks on the metal her fingers, pushing in between the bedding and the wall beneath the opening, touched something that attracted her attention. She pulled the coverlet aside. Then, after an instant of surprise, she reached forward gingerly and brought up a half smoked cigarette.

"Really," she said at length, "if I look here again I'll probably discover, yo ho ho, the original dead man's chest with the fifteen bottles of rum on it."

She had never seen such a cigarette as this which must have fallen from that square hand. The wrapper was not of paper. It was brown, seemingly cut from some sort of dried leaf. Still damp at the end, its tough fibre had been flattened out by the teeth of the smoker to a knife edge. And, in order to keep the wrapper rolled in place, there had been tied round it a little strip of the same brown material.

The girl sat staring at the cigarette. If she had not been quite convinced before, there could be no question now that someone was aboard, hiding unsuspected. She was serious again. With the touch



of that leaf wrapper there had returned upon her an uneasiness, growing, for some obscure reason, into alarm.

Ought she to tell Captain Pedersen, Mrs. Crawford? She sat for a time, disturbed. Then, all at once, a laugh. Her expression became ominously mischievous.

"I must," she announced, "see our pirate chief at once and alone, for a very special and secret reason."

Palmyra was searching the Rainbow. She had penetrated as far, in the 'tween-decks, as the space set aside for the heavy baggage of the guests.

Here below, where the pitch and roll of a small vessel seems so much more formidable than on deck with the sails and sea, Van and John and the Wampolds, who had followed her, stood clinging one to another, laughingly puzzled at the way she had poked and peered into dark corners.

The girl explored among the big steel trunks that moved a little in unison, in a clumsy rhythm, as if in some inanimate way they were like the on-lookers at a dance, whose feet cannot resist the music. As she held to one chest or another, her body now swinging away from its support, now brought into contact, one realized what a splendid physical strength was hers, both by inheritance and the reward of well-used muscles.

Van regarded her severely. "Really," he said; "really I marvel at anyone trying to examine the fabric of a yacht without a microscope. Such superficiality. Deplorable."



The others laughed, but not the girl.

As she had reached out for a big trunk a dip of the Rainbow drove her extended hand on and down over. Her fingers came, rather awfully, into contact with a something warm and furry, but solid. And—the something moved!

Her purpose, as she was saying to herself, had been to lay her hand upon a pirate. But this too literal achievement set her a-quiver. She fought against revealing the discomfiture which had come with the touch of that unseen pate.

“Last night,” she said a little breathlessly, “I felt like Aladdin. But now, now it’s Ali Baba. Ali Baba, and a thief—I mean a pirate—behind every one of these trunks. Every one.”

As she spoke she listened, and now, as if in answer, there came to her from the shadowed corner a stealthy sound. But none of the others seemed to notice.

“A pirate?” Van was commenting. “Then, let’s go. I shouldn’t want to walk the plank till I’d had my tea.”

The tone was light. But he was, for the second time in five minutes, dusting with a handkerchief at his hands. Born to that American aristocracy which has founded itself upon human nature despite all contrary declarations of the constitution as to the equality of man, he had an almost hereditary distaste for the dinginess and grime of the under places. Give him ever the prepared and proper stage of life. There, indeed, he could be a sure and gracious figure.

Palmyra assented. “I go,” she said, “but I

shall return. I like these lower regions; so still, so dark, so mysterious. Peopled by the denizens of another world. I shall return—" she paused significantly—"tonight. I shall come back. . . ."

"She means," interpreted Van, "to sneak pickles and ham, chicken and jam for one real uninterrupted . . ."

The girl laughed. "As you have said: with food and drink, I shall return at the sacred hour of midnight."

She gave them a covert glance. But, unaware of the hand, of that hidden presence, neither Thurston nor the others realized that her, to them, idle chatter held any purpose of return.

They moved to go.

And once more there came from out the dark that stealthy wraith of sound—intimidating, sinister.

## CHAPTER III

### NIGHT, AND A FACE

#### MIDNIGHT.

Palmyra swung the bulkhead door open.

Then, with the last note of eight bells coming down to her, she hesitated. From somewhere below she could hear, with every pitch of the yacht, the clank-clank of iron. A sea burst against the vessel's side and the girl was startled by the force of impact. Now that she was alone, how different it was down here; the darkness menacing, alive with groaning whispers of sound, yet empty save for that unseen presence. She was, unexpectedly, a little afraid.

But she had her definite purpose.

Palmyra entered, placed sandwiches, a bottle of water, an electric torch on the deck. Then she shut the heavy door. Instantly she had let go, she staggered, came down on the planking in a heap. Never before had she tried to stand in the reeling 'tween-decks with no slightest flicker of light by which the eye could keep an equilibrium.

She was no longer afraid. That had been the night, rather than the lurking form she could so well have feared. For hers was the courage of innocence. Her sole contact with the outlawry of life having been in fiction, she had scarcely any real perception that such men, such dangers, were actually to be met in existence.

As she crouched now she was feeling for the torch. She could hear it rolling back and forth in capricious figures, elusive, exasperating. Then, at last, it bumped against her hand and she switched on the current.

"Here I am," she announced cheerily.

Silence.

She got up, waited, the torch casting a moon of light upon the food and water.

Presently she raised the lamp. Its ray advanced along the deck to the end of the compartment, returned across the bottom of the line of trunks, stopped.

In the center of the spotlight were two feet. They were small, encased in button shoes. They dangled, juvenily, six inches from the deck. For a moment she thought that here was a boy.

But as the disk of illumination moved upward it revealed the body of a man, small, plump; dressed in a way one might associate with the racetrack, ringside. The checked suit, fancy vest, bright tan gloves, above all the walking stick, were ludicrously unnautical.

With the light on the man's face, Palmyra barely suppressed a laugh. "Pardon me," she said at length, "but you're not quite the—the character I expected. The torch cutting you off at the chin, you look just like one of the cherubim."

He owled back with an expression of disfavor. "Well I'm not," he said shortly. "I'm a seafaring man."

The voice was American.

At first glimpse, the juvenile note had returned,

tēfold. Pink, plump-cheeked, unlined, beardless; more the countenance, this, of a babe of three than a man of thirty-five or even forty. Only at second glance, at least under artificial light, did one discover a something stamped on those infantile features by the passing years, a something, in its incongruity, almost comically revolting.

While the Rainbow rose to a sea, poised aloft, came slumping down again, Palmyra continued to stare, puzzled. Then, "What a bad little boy you must have been," she said to herself. And, "What a bad little boy you still are."

The face now broke into a grin and the man said: "I ask you, lady, is it fair t'keep me hove to under yer light, when I can't make out a line o' yer rig?"

She took up the water and sandwiches and put these on the trunk next that on which he sat. Then she backed away to a seat opposite, turned the torch upon them.

One of the gloved hands snatched up the water, and he drank eagerly. "I sure was dry as hel—as *pueliko*," he said. "Not a drop since I stove in my own bottle."

He reached for a sandwich and the girl wished he would take off those gloves.

"Not every lady," he went on admiringly, "would lay below at midnight t'ferret out a stowaway."

As the Rainbow drove into another sea there came again that fettered clink and clank of iron away somewhere in the dark. At the sound Palmyra stirred with a returning disquiet, vague but insistent, that could scarcely have been a response to anything in the man's tone.

But a moment later she laughed. "Why should I have been afraid?" she asked. "I knew you wouldn't dare touch me, for you couldn't have got away."

There came an approving chuckle. "I see, I mean I hear, y'got a head on you," said the voice. "And," it added, "I thank y'for keeping dark—not now, but this afternoon. The minute y'says that about Al somebody and the thieves, I knew y'was kidding."

She shifted the light to his face. "Why are you aboard?" she demanded.

He hesitated. "Because," he explained presently, "I'd sooner be here than in the cold, cold grave. Not," he added with a shiver which set the plump cheeks a-tremble, "that I ain't cold here, too."

"Grave?" inquired Palmyra.

"Bullet," explained the stowaway.

The girl smiled invisibly. She did not think anyone would feel it necessary to shoot such a plump little man.

"As for who I am," he continued, "I'm asking you, lady; do y'know the Line? The Line islands, I mean—the Gilberts, Marshalls, Carolines?"

She shook her head. Then realizing he could not see, added a spoken negative.

A juvenile brassy pridefulness that was forming itself upon the face, faded away. "If y'was knowing t'the Line, lady, you'd savvy Ponapé Burke. Named after the biggest o' the Carolines by admirers—" a titter—"and also them as is not so admiring. As I says before, I follow the sea. Master o' my own craft."

"You don't look like a sailor."



Ponapé Burke glanced down at his invisible body in a naïve sense of compliment. "*Mangaia*, eh?" he conceded affably. She'd never guess he'd been beating about the Pacific for seventeen year, now would she? When a man got back at last to America, God's country, it was up to him to look civilized, dressy; to rig out in style, as befitted one who'd owned and mastered some of the sweetest sailing schooners that ever cut the Line.

Palmyra was amused, sceptical. "But why . . ."

"I'm stowed away 'cause I had t'make my westing *quiet*! If this yacht puts back with me," he added, "I'm a corpse. That's why I thank you. Y'kept still, and those hours counted. Now, she'll more likely hold her course."

The girl smiled delightedly. Once again, Arabian Nights, ahoy!

There had been, it seemed, a Chinese merchant of Bagdad—no, Honolulu—who was sending a cargo to California that would go under the hatches rice and tea, but come out coolies and opium. He wanted just the right sort of man along to smuggle them through, and Ponapé Burke, who had been idling about the town, was chosen.

"But, lady," he explained earnestly, "don't mistake. I sure meant t'play fair and square with Uncle Sam. I planned both t'make a piece o'side money and do my plumb duty as a citizen by tipping off the contraband."

He paused while the Rainbow plunged again and the darkness around them filled with groaning complaint of mast and timber. Had the light been upon the girl's face he would have seen dislike at this



treachery so frankly confessed. But his own countenance beamed only with enjoyment of the intended coup; innocent of any slightest perception of the shame of bad faith.

As he went on, however, his features turned ugly with disgust. Uncle Sam had proved an unbelievable tightwad, and the Orientals had discovered Burke's attempt. They had set gunmen after him. Every vessel clearing for an island port was watched. And "for a reason"—which the man did not explain—he was conspicuous.

"I could of laid up ashore," he concluded, "but some *ulavale* devil Shanghaies my bankroll and leaves me just plain on the beach. So I stows away here."

Palmyra thought it safe to believe he might really have been robbed. "So, then," she inquired in a tone of regret, "you're not, after all, a pirate? I felt you might have heard the Rainbow was seeking buried treasure."

Ponapé Burke shot a look of interest in her direction. Then, apparently annoyed that, for even a moment, he could have taken her seriously, he voiced a protest: "Lady, this afternoon the light was right abaft yer head. Couldn't make yer face then, and now . . . 'Tain't fair. I can't tell when you're kidding me."

On an impulse the girl reversed the torch so that it flooded her features. So she sat, silent, motionless as a wax figure, looking straight out at him over the flame, with wide still eyes. The effect was theatric. From the dark, silence; a silence lasting so long that the color began to rise into her cheeks. Vexed by a belated recognition of the coquetry of

the act, she switched off the lamp and they sat in the black night.

Presently: "Miss, why did y'lay below here?"

She had lain below mischievously to consult a buccaneer. So, "I'm sorry you don't smack more of the Spanish Main," was what she said.

The annoyed tone returned to the voice. "Y'mean I, I don't look like no two-fisted man? Is that what y'mean?"

The girl smiled. It came to her as an inspiration that her pirate, in rebellion against his harmless exterior, was accustomed to paint lurid pictures of the soul within.

"There's others has made the same mistake," the voice went on in confirmation. "And some wishes they hadn't. It beats all how a little man's got t' *prove* everything. Gosh—" enviously—"but a big brute has it easy. His orders go, and no question. But a guy like me? Why, I've had t'ruin half a dozen big slobs before I could make 'em see a little man might sometimes mean what he said."

He paused in that queer flat titter of his. Then he asked: "But what did y'have in mind? Maybe we could do better'n y'think."

Palmyra shook her head invisibly. "Oh, no," she said, "you're not at all the sort." But she explained. When she had found there was someone aboard, she recalled a popular comedy: a burglar entrapped, all unknown to the others, with a house party under guard in quarantine; no end of mystery, excitement, before he'd been discovered. "And I hoped," she concluded, "we could get up a little plot. Something piratical, thrilly. But," she ad-

ded resignedly, "not a one would be scared at you."

From the dark there came a prolonged chuckle. "Well," hesitated Burke at length, "if y'insist on pirates. . . . But why not some stunt a little more genteel? A concert, say? Know a lot o' native songs."

In sample he gave her a phrase; a chanting fragment, rhythm without music; low-voiced words, mellifluous, polysyllabic.

"There," he concluded with a touch of pride. "Something like that."

But the girl scorned minstrelsy.

He relapsed into the laugh—to her irritation. "Pirates it is," he assented. "And even if yer bunch ain't scairt o' me, maybe we could frame 'em up a startle. Wouldn't be a bit surprised. Not a bit." He was much amused.

She remained unconvinced and he laughed again.

"Might be my better nature don't look like no bucket o' blood," he conceded. "But if yer friends could just see my, my other self . . ."

There was silence for an interval. Then, "D'y' know where the gangway is y'came in at?" he asked unexpectedly.

The girl looked, puzzled, toward him; turned her gaze in the direction of the door. "Yes," she said wonderingly, "I know exactly where it is."

"Then," said Ponapé Burke, "just give it one flash with yer torch."

In the moment of Palmyra's pause a sea struck, thunderously, against the Rainbow's quarter. The masts groaned again; from somewhere a crash of

crockery. The unilluminated universe seemed to stagger and slide from under.

The girl was, suddenly again, a little afraid. Hark? Was that a sound of Burke, moving?

Her thumb touched the torch. As a lightning flash, its ray shot forward, landed full upon the plump vest, the chubby infantile face. Burke still sat on the trunk.

Again darkness; impenetrable, intimidating.

Before Burke could have moved, she whirled toward the entry, switched on the light.

The shaft leaped across, and then in its circle, vivid against the door, there sprang into being a savage face. Wild, copper-hued, it held rigid as jungle lion caught by photo-flashlight. Under a great mat of hair, fierce staring eyes, grinning lips drawn back from two rows of square teeth that clamped upon the blade of a ten-inch knife.

It was not the face of Burke.

It was not the face of a white man.

## CHAPTER IV

### A PIRATE SENDS IN HIS CARD

NEXT morning Mrs. Crawford and her guests were gathered in lee of the deckhouse, bundled in their rugs.

The sun, only at intervals, had been blinking through, bringing a touch of warmth to the surface of the sea, charming the spreading canvas into life. As, presently, Palmyra roused from her preoccupation to join the others in a laugh, the luminary glanced down again and printed on the deck, black and sharp-edged, the shifting shadows of the sails.

Such a shade lay across the girl's face. When the Rainbow rose to a surge, the shadow moved, as a curtain up, and the sunbeam caught in turn and illumined perfect teeth, dimples, eyes that danced with fun; set a-flame the crown of bright hair, her most noticeable endowment.

But soon she was somber again. She had been shaken by that fierce visage leaping out at her from the dark. Coming so suddenly, so without warning, it had been dreadful. The thing in its disk of light had been like a bas-relief, a medallion; so still, so impressive, so ferocious.

Had it been doubly fierce in contrast with Ponapé Burke's harmless physiognomy? And that knife? Pirates were always pictured, a gory blade between their teeth. Had that given the effect of savagery,

or was the face itself so inherently savage as not to be cheapened by a stale and theatric trick? Upon another look that mask would doubtless seem more human. But today she felt she had never been so repelled by a living countenance.

She should have suspected a second presence. One glance at Burke's hand, gloved though it was, should have sufficed. It was small, pudgy. Quite the type for great-grandmother mitts, but never the thick sinewy paw that had fastened upon the cabin port. Her wits about her, she should have mistrusted Burke's song; not have waited to be told afterwards that he was chanting: "*Silent, go, stand against the door, knife in teeth, and look terrific.*"

At this point the shadow of the sail came swooping down again across Palmyra's eyes and she awoke to find that Mrs. Durley, the stewardess, was regarding her with an amused and curious expression. The girl flushed guiltily.

Mrs. Durley stepped forward, hesitated, held out a card tray. "A gentleman to see you, Miss Tree," she announced.

At once the circle was alert. What novelty was this? No one had stolen away to prepare a masquerade.

"A gentleman to see Miss Tree?" inquired Mrs. Crawford in amused acceptance of the play. "Why, how unexpected."

"Airplane or sea horse?" questioned Van, and shivered.

Despite the heavy following seas that were piled up against the yacht's quarter, she was making good



weather of it. But the water had again turned cold, repellent, dangerous, the gray surges, as they ran past, rising above the lee rail.

Mrs. Durley was insisting. Really and truly, a strange gentleman. Wasn't aboard when the Rainbow sailed.

They were, of course, unbelieving.

"Honest, ma'am," affirmed the stewardess. "A fattish little man. In a loud suit and a brass-headed cane. He was standing there and he says: 'Sister, just take my card up to the—begging your pardon, miss—up to the striking blond young lady. Her and me's close friends.'"

Palmyra looked up from the card, a Los Angeles cafe's, with the stowaway's name penciled across it. "Why," she exclaimed in a tone compounded of mischief and misgiving, "it's Mr. Burke." Then, as they puzzled, trying to understand the fun: "Surely, you know Mr. Burke—Mr. Ponapé Burke?"

At this moment she caught sight of the man himself, standing in the alley between the house and the rail.

"Mrs. Crawford," she introduced, "this is Mr. Burke, the well-known pirate. Will be pleased, yo ho ho, to demonstrate walking the plank. I'm sure if you could see him scuttle a ship, you'd feel we'd been greatly distinguished."

But here Captain Pedersen pounced upon them. "Why, why what, what's this, Miss Tr . . ." He broke off, evidently realizing he could not berate a guest. He whirled upon Mrs. Durley. "Stewardess, what does this mean? Yust what does this mean?"

Palmyra had decided she didn't quite like the

sailing master. An old man, he impressed her as irritatingly fussy, as nursing some chronic sense of personal imposition. But Mrs. Crawford had said he was slowly recovering from a dangerous illness.

Burke was repeating his explanation of the night before. The girl was struck that again he made not the slightest effort to minimize his treachery. Apparently he saw nothing unethical in it. "But, ma'am," he concluded, "though I'm stowed away here broke I can yet pay. I know the islands—any group. Speak half a dozen lingo. Few could give y' the same help."

Captain Pedersen was still ruffled.

"Oh, come now, Captain," smiled Mrs. Crawford, "we really should have shipped a pirate when we went into commission. No vessel can consider itself fully well found without its own private buccaneer."

Palmyra's complicity had left the hostess no course other than to be thus amiable.

By daylight the pirate's face had lost its cherubic aspect. Still singularly undeveloped as to line and feature, there was now more visibly upon it a maturity of significance that could only have been stamped by dissipation, hardship and danger, or some more violent temperamental urge than, at first view, could have been suspected. A semicircular scar on the right temple—as even innocent scars so often do—added an ugly touch. The whole countenance, in fact, so over-emphasized the note of infantile incorrigibility as somehow to become thereby almost ingratiating in its air of depravity.

But if Burke's face had gained in significance, his

figure had not. The cane was so obviously external to the man's habit of life, the suit so aggressively ill-judged an effect, that the girl knew he must become a far more dignified being with the cap and cotton drilling of the tropical ship's master.

Moreover, he now verged on the pathetic, shaking with cold. As a seaman led him away forward, Palmyra recollected, with a stab of pity, that brown creature down below. If Burke, born to the north, was chattering with chill, what of this miserable being who now faced it for the first time in life?

The girl started, impulsively, to rise, then sank back again. She had seen the steward below, a short time past, overhauling blankets, a reserve supply for the men forward. If she could manage to get one or two of these coverings. . . . Compassion urged the deed. But—she was afraid.

Presently, however, a well-authenticated chin settled into place and two lips grew arbitrary. She arose, excused herself, and marched down the companionway. Yes, the blankets were still there. She snatched two, secured her torch and reached the bulkhead door, unchallenged.

As she swung the heavy door to, she was reprimanding herself for her timidity. What was there to fear? Why, nothing at all. And yet this senseless, this overpowering repulsion. It could be no wholesome normal emotion; rather some psychological quirk; the same sort of terror a child, growing older and knowing better, still has for the dark. She, Palmyra, was afraid of a brown native because he had an ugly face!

She switched on the torch, forced herself forward.

Then, after a moment's hesitation: "Here—you! Are you cold? I have two blankets."

She stood, waiting, listening. She could feel the darkness move with unseen menace. But the dead silence of that prisoned space gave back no sound of life. Perhaps this savage did not understand a word she'd spoken.

She might have swept the ray into all the corners, but she hesitated to repeat the vision of the night before. Rather, she held the blankets up invitingly and, in silence, turned the jet of light upon them. For almost a minute she waited thus. Then, suddenly, without warning preliminary of sound, there appeared within the outer circle of light the ends of four great square fingers.

Almost, the girl sprang back, cried out in panic.

A moment the fingers paused. Then they came thrusting toward her from the dark. For a flash it seemed that it must be herself they meant to seize. Then they closed upon the blankets, rested there an instant, withdrew with their prize again into the night whence they had come.

But, brief as the interval, it had been enough. Here at last was the hand that had been sent through the port: square, sinewy, brown; adorned even to the great-grandmother mitts.

And only now did she belatedly realize that these mitts were not of silk, but of tattooer's ink.

## CHAPTER V

### PALMTREE AND OLIVE

WHEN the girl came on deck next morning there the savage sat, cross-legged on the fore-hatch, huddled under his blankets in the sun.

Two seamen, their yarn-capped heads poking out from behind the mast, grinned and gaped. Captain Pedersen stood off and on in comic chagrin. Constance Crawford, asking eager questions, glowed in knitted scarlet between Van and Thurston in yachtsman's blue: Van entirely at home; big John stamped with a something, as of mountain top and forest, that managed to make him a little foreign to this nautical setting. And in the center of the group was Ponapé Burke, already turned showman.

As Palmyra and her parents appeared, he was explaining that the remote intelligence at his feet knew no word of any white man's language.

After a moment's shrinking inspection of the face, she perceived with relief that it fell short of the fantastical ferocity with which her recollection had endowed it. The knife, for one thing, was lacking. Perhaps that blade had had more than anything else to do with the startling effect.

The square and shining teeth were now exposed in an expansive grin. In fact, the whole brown face—of a color neither African, Chinese, nor yet American Indian—had apparently been designed for the elaboration of that one fixed expression of mirth.

If the savage recognized her she was unable to note any change in his countenance. Indeed, she saw that this copper mask would seldom, if ever, yield to the civilized eye any useful indication of the mood within.

She did perceive, however, that the brown man, even more than Burke, was belittled by his nondescript garments. Particularly so by the clumsy shoes, as extraneous to his life as the cane to his master's and obviously a torture.

As she looked upon those shoes Palmyra's ogre appeared to have turned out rather more comic than dreadful. She wondered how she had managed to endow him with attributes so terrifying. But as she ridiculed herself she happened to raise her eyes again to that face. Then, instantly, her smile froze. The brown man's gaze was fixed upon her. No indeed; the savage was anything but comical.

The girl had never seen such eyes. So intensely pigmented were they that the color escaped beyond the circle of the iris. There were, around its rim, little brown stains on the white, spreading like ink on soft paper. She was angered at her involuntary tribute to the power of those eyes. What was there about this creature that should strike her as so sinister?

Palmyra turned away to regain her self-possession. The wind was still strong, the sea lively; but the sky was blue and the sun bright. And the ocean in its morning aspect managed to impress one as with an air of friendliness.

Ponapé Burke, showman, had seized a double handful of the bush of hair on the native's head, and



was saying: "Glancing t'the right, la-adies and gents, y'll observe as this here kanaka has got hair."

The girl had indeed noted the fact. Extremely thick and in no sense kinky, it grew into an astonishing pompadour.

"'Tisn't so much that he's got hair," Burke was saying, "as that his hair ain't black, as you'd expect, but a pretty gay species o' tan. Which, la-adies and gents, is South Sea beauty-parlor stuff."

The truth was this fellow regularly plastered his hair full of lime. Slapped it on to his coco as if he were doing a wall.

"'Tis dee-lightfully sanitary, la-adies," the showman added, "and colors the hair up any shade o' blond y'like. But—" he tittered and glanced audaciously at Miss Tree's own head—"the very foxiest and most envied hue some of 'em succeeds in getting up is a real orangey near-red."

At his allusion, Van Buren Rutger laughed and Palmyra Tree flushed. Here no bobbed henna, but a crown of flaming tress; at once her own despair and the hairdresser's dream. Metallic, giving back fire for fire to the sun, it was, round her face, a massy burnished frame; for her lithe body, should she have let the strands fall, a living garment of spun ember.

And still Van laughed. "Oh, admirable," he cried. "An admirable effect. And never till the moment did I suspect. . . . Why, Palm Tree. . . ."

This amusing abbreviation was no work of Van's. It was what her friends had called her since earliest days in school. Then Constance Crawford had christened Palmyra Tree for all time by discovering

that, if you crossed out the "yra," you got a name exactly like that under one of the geography pictures.

But now, when Van called the girl "Palm Tree," the pirate's gaze fastened upon her. His look of interest, surprise, like all the expressions of that face, was a duality of elements seemingly impossible in co-existence; opposites, utterly incompatible yet always and equally there: an infantile innocence, everything still to learn; an age-old sophistication of experience. She wondered whether it would be possible for anyone to be familiar only with the physical aspect of the happenings of being, never guessing their inner significances, their meaning in life.

"Excuse me, miss," Ponapé Burke was saying, "but didn't I hear this gent a-calling you 'Palm-tree'?"

She assented.

"But what, what kind of a joke. . . ."

"It isn't a joke," she affirmed. "My family name is Tree and—" she glanced amusedly at Constance—"my *given* name is Palm."

The stowaway stared, grinned, repeated the name. Hadn't caught her moniker before. Never had heard such a name anywhere. He turned to his savage, spoke animatedly, nodded his head toward her. The brown man's eyes sought the girl's face once more and she felt sure he had, in some obscure way, been moved. There was certainly a something new upon that strange countenance.

Palmyra, for some reason, resented this interest. She felt no more in common with the brown man than with a lion. And in fact, she realized now he

made her think of a lion. Yes, with that tawny mane, he was, really was, leonine. And he must be as dangerous.

The Rainbow, every now and then, had been staggering into a sea. Presently a great flop of water struck full aboard. When Palmyra and the others fled, laughing, shrieking, toward the weather rail, the green wash pursued them up the deck, seething and hissing about their heels.

As the savage had sat upon the hatch, a corner of blanket touched the teakwood. When he reached down to rescue the fabric his thick right forearm shot out from cover and so remained. The girl, returning from the windward deck, became aware of a line of blue-black markings along the inner side of this arm. She discovered with surprise that these tattooings were letters—her own alphabet. At first she did not catch the word because two of its symbols were upside down. Apparently the tattooer had been unable to decide from which way his work would be read. But, when she had allowed for this, she was puzzled to find the word one entirely familiar.

“Why,” she cried impulsively, “what is that he has tattooed on his arm?”

Immediately, the savage, noting the direction of her gaze, drew the arm back under the blanket, and the girl, who had so recently pronounced his face unreadable, now fancied she could make some sort of guess at his emotion—a flash of annoyance.

Ponapé Burke laughed and, shortly, she joined in. “Shouldn’t I have mentioned it?” she asked.

“People oughtn’t, but they usually does,” he explained. “Island names are sure *suamalié* as

hel. . . . Sugar-sweet, but impossible t'say unless y'know where the hump comes. So folks is always struck by this short easy American word." He paused in his amusement. "That word, miss," he added, "is the sole, one and only reason why this big buck kanaka is here today and not dead in his grave."

"But what's it for?" asked her father.

"Mister," said Burke, "civilization hasn't shipped all the up-to-date ideas yet. When you gents gets introduced, y'looks embarrassed-like and says: 'Excuse me, I didn't quite catch yer label.' But here in the islands, manywheres, y'just peeks down, foxey, as y'grips hands, and reads what's printed on the other *tamaloa's* arm. For that's his name."

"Oh, what a splendid custom for us to start up at home," exclaimed Palmyra's mother.

"Gentlemen could," agreed Van, "have a transparent panel in the sleeve, like an envelope."

Constance Crawford laughed. "And debutantes could leave a space to have their tattooing amended: 'Smith, was Jones.'"

"And divorced and remarried," said Van, "they'll be plump enough for added lines on the register."

Ponapé Burke was joining in with his toneless mirth. He leaned forward, a sly look upon his face absurdly blending innocence and evil. "But what," he asked confidentially, "about the police? Sure welcome such a system, eh? No, sir. Not for me. Nobody'll type a title on to my skin."

Before the pirate took up the story of his brown companion's name, he paused to explain that the savage's mother was of mountainous Samoa—"and

him the homeliest brute the race ever produced"—and his father of Nanomea atoll, where nearly every man was a six-footer or better. As for Olive himself, he was a cosmopolitan; adventuring hither and yon, picking up ideas, customs and tattooings as he went.

While Burke talked, Palmyra's gaze rested upon a steamer far away to starboard. The vessel's white upper works were clearly in view as she drove through the seas, and the funnels with their black belch of smoke. But the girl's mind was focused upon a vision of the long ago; of a time when this great savage was a naked brown baby riding on his mother's hip like a clothespin.

If it had been a pop bottle that the fat horizon-burster (white man) flung into the bird's nest fern beside the spring, or had it been a biscuit box or even an empty tobacco tin, this lion of a man would not now be here. Far away on some somnolent speck of coral he would be drowsing through the years; ignorant as to white men's ways, safe forever from the questionable leadership of Ponapé Burke; never to touch and cross the life course of Miss Palmyra Tree of Boston. But it was not a pop bottle that the fat horizon-burster flung into the bird's nest fern. Neither had it been a biscuit box nor an empty tobacco tin. It was a bottle which had held olives.

There, as the olive bottle had fallen, the island mother, her babe upon her hip, found it. Standing where the outlanders off the ship had regaled themselves from the glass and tin cans that differentiate the sons of civilization from the simple children of nature, she had held the empty bottle up before the eyes of the naked brown baby that he might admire



the bright red and green of its lithograph. She had tried to make out the inscription upon it—such words, belike, as these:

## ONYX BRAND

The Hubbard Extra-Choice

QUEEN

OLIVE

The print was as oddly familiar, yet bafflingly unreadable, as a sentence in Russian would have been to Palmyra. For in the mother's alphabet there were but fourteen letters: eleven of our consonants unmeaning characters.

But as her glance fell upon the word "Olive," she smiled. Here was a combination that spelled; every letter as familiar as if it had been in the name of her own village. And of consonants there were no two together nor none at the end, as in most white men's words, to trip the Polynesian tongue.

"Behold, chiefly son," she had cried to the baby on her hip; "here is a so-island word—'O-l-i-v-e.' What to it, think you, is a meaning? Easy to the eye, tinkling to the tongue, and set forth upon a horizon-burster's strong-water bottle (to her all bottles meant liquor)."

Did not their men-o'-war's-men, the whole company so strong to override the world, forever drink from these bottles? And did not the fighters say it was the *vai-malosi* that made them bold and fierce?

Presently the mother's face had lighted with inspiration. Here, undoubtedly among warriors, was the great word. And here, upon her hip, was the



greatest man alive. What better, then, than this for a name?

And so it was that the brown baby, who had gone up unto the well, naked and unnamed, came down therefrom clothed with identity; to be known forever to all white men as "Olive," and to his South Sea kinsmen, according to their reading of its letters, as "*O-lee-vay*."

"I'm telling y' the absolute truth," asserted Burke. "This here kanaka was, in good faith, named after a bottle o' queen olives."

And the fun of it was that they hadn't known it decidedly wasn't the name for a warrior bold until everlastingly too late. Not till a week after the tattooing did a beachcomber happen along and note with hilarity that this youth, who's supposed to bear a big manly cognomen like "Gin" or "Hootch," is in reality branded with an appellation dedicated among white men to queens—behind the counter or over it.

"The beachcomber spreads the news," grinned Burke, "and the laugh works t'wind'ard and t'lee. This young brave becomes a human joke, and his whole life is changed."

"The name in *Nemesis*," commented Van Buren Rutger.

For the boy, taunted on every hand with bearing a maiden crest, had been, first shamed and embittered, then filled with a passionate ambition to prove his spirit. Whatever they, those mockers, could achieve in strength and courage, that, he of the woman's name, could and would achieve in two-fold power. That which they, for all their strength and courage

would not dare, that he would seek out and of a habit do.

"And, believe me," concluded Burke, "he ain't like no kanaka I ever saw. There isn't such another heller in the whole South Seas. That's why I had him in California. Isn't a stunt on earth he wouldn't try if he got the notion."

Burke's glance took in the silent motionless mass of man on the hatch with prideful ownership. Then he broke again into his oddly unadult mirth. "Look at him now," he cried. "Look at him. Mad clear through."

They turned their smiling eyes upon the brown man.

"Mad clear through," repeated his master. "Since Miss Tree pointed t'his arm we all been laughing a lot. And he thinks it's at him."

## CHAPTER VI

### OLIVE ASKS AND PONAPÉ BASKS

LATER in the day Palmyra found her pirates alone.

Ponapé Burke had taken one of Olive's blankets. They sat side by side, gripping stolidly the khaki fabric that struggled, flapping to the wind behind their backs. As they balanced, cross-legged on the hatch, the white man had a somewhat Humpty Dumptyish air, as if the next time the Rainbow went surging forward through a sea with her lee channels under water, he must go rolling toward the scuppers. But the brown man was solid as a stone.

The savage had that gift, unknown in foot-wagging, finger-tapping, chair-rocking America, of sitting absolutely still; a gift that gave him at times all the value of a life-sized statue in bronze or copper. But now, in answer to some remark of Burke's, he broke—startlingly, because unexpectedly—into a gesticular animation worthy of the most volatile of Latins. Only in this change did the girl perceive how striking his passivity.

As she studied the pair, the one so plump and harmless seeming, the other so fierce of look and so dangerous, she was impressed by the fancy that, if Burke had retained something of his infantile aspect, this might be no less true of Olive. The one was round-faced and pink because he'd been that kind of baby. The other must have been born very much

as now; shaggy maned, square toothed—the complete savage.

She was surprised to discover that the brown man must be a good six foot one or two. At first inspection she had been engrossed with the mere bulk of him. The great chest had seemed on the point of bursting through its blue flannel covering. On second view she was understanding that here was a being of unusual strength; one who, as he cast aside the belittling garments of civilization with a return of the tropics, would stand revealed, in body if not in face, as typically the noble savage of tradition.

She indicated the letters on the copper-colored arm. "You said," she began to Burke, "were it not, not for these. . . ."

The brown man again withdrew the arm from sight and Ponapé Burke began to laugh; a tittering mirth which seemed always, for some reason, to visualize him for her as a little boy.

"'S a fact," the stowaway ended by affirming. "Him dead; me, too, for that. 'Twas on Tanna. I'd had t'shoot an *ulavale* sort of a fool there through the head."

She was, for a moment, startled.

"And they was about t'croak me in turn," he continued, "when in rushes half a dozen rescuing kanakas from some vessel's crew. In the excitement I fetches clear. And—*alofa tele mai!*—I don't wait t'see how those heroes comes out. It's four t'one agin 'em."

She repressed a flash of contempt.

"Afterwards," he went on, apparently without any sense of the ingrate, "all I remembers is this

here word 'Olive' tattooed on the arm o' the big buck who knocked my jailor flat. Queer how I could get it, remember it, all in a second."

Six years later, on this same island, he'd happened along when the Tannamen were about to butcher some big kanaka they'd caught. Burke had stood by, just as Miss Tree or anyone else, it being none of his business but interesting-like, when what less does he see, on the prisoner's arm, then this name "Olive."

"I knows there can't be any two Olives in this one barrel o' brine," Burke explained. "But it wasn't my funeral. Bye and bye, though, it begins t'come into my bean that this person's a rattling good scrapper and savvies seafaring, and'd be much obliged t'me for saving his life—a useful combination on my hooker. So I up and buys him off'n the Tannamen for six bottles o' gin."

The girl was thinking of the narrator rather than the narrative. To judge by the man's words, he was callous beyond credence. But she did not so judge. In place of being revolted, she was amused. Only with difficulty did she keep back a smile, for she did not believe.

This story was quite in accord with her idea of Burke: that he was no more than a bad little boy grown up; for all practical purposes still a bad little boy. When he'd been young the other youngsters had thrown mud on his new shoes and stolen his hat, and when he made up awful yarns about himself, they weren't afraid. And now that he was grown he hated being plump and insignificant, and made up bigger stories for bigger persons. And

all, alas, futile. Not even grandmothers trembled. A nicer sort of man, he'd have been pathetic. As it was he only managed to be decidedly diverting.

She disciplined a mischievous twitching at the corners of her mouth. "And was Olive—or should I say *O-lee-vay*?—appreciative? Did he repay your nobility in saving his life?"

Ponapé Burke grunted. "Those six bottles o' square-face, miss, was the best investment I ever made. Grateful? Kick him around and he takes it like a dog, where he'd break any other fool's back across his knee, same's a piece o' kindling."

Palm's pirate paused while his sailor's glance turned aloft to seek out, amongst the complainings of mast and rigging, an insistent squeal that came from some block as its sheaves worked on a rusty pin. Then, subconsciously, he noted the trim of sail, the aspect of the sky.

When his eyes came back to her there was in them a warning glint of the brassy assurance, seldom long absent. "Speaking o' this big brute," he began, indicating Olive; "he don't do nothing now but ask questions about you."

The girl did not know whether to like that or not.

To begin with, said Burke, it was her courage. She hadn't squawked at the hand in the port nor the face under the spotlight. And she'd come down with blankets when a brown being was in misery with cold.

As regarded the hand: The stowaways, precariously hidden on deck in a boat, had taken the first chance to sneak below. Burke had got to cover,



but a seaman, unexpectedly starting that way, would have caught Olive. The islander had slipped overside at that point, dangling from a stanchion, only his hands visible. He had put one down to the port, intending to hang trailing from that if the sailor came near. A roll of the yacht thrust his forearm through. Then the seaman had turned away and Olive lifted himself back to deck.

But far more important than Palmyra Tree's courage and kindness was her name. To the white man it had seemed interesting, to the brown, astonishing.

"In the low islands," said Burke, "the palmtree's the most important thing they got. Couldn't live without it a day."

Here, aside from fish, there was often no food except the pandanus—scorned elsewhere—and the cocoanut. The nuts were eaten at every meal; cooked or raw, green, ripe, germinated. For all the accessories of life the palm could be made, if need were, to furnish the material. And there being on the atolls no rivulets or springs—upon the worst not even brackish wells—the Micronesians sometimes went for weeks without a drop of water, drinking the cool, clear, slightly acid liquid of the half grown nuts.

And she was named Palmtree!

In the atolls then where the Americans lived—over beyond the cold island of Kalifo'nia—did the trade wind also flutter the tender green leaflets like the adornments of a woman's dress? Did the moon there also pour down its radiance, setting the palm feathers a-glisten as the shining beauty of a woman's

hair? Did life in America, as here, so center round the palm tree—the dispenser of life—that some wise persons thought God had created himself in the image of the palm?

Then she, so tall and lithe yet strong that she made you think of Mother Niu, the tree, herself; so brave that you likened her to the palm who thrusts her roots out into the surf where no other tree dare grow—then she must be the high daughter of the superlord of America himself, that he could appropriate unto her the name most meaningful of all?

The girl who was named Palmtree was surprised, pleased, indignant. Could it actually be that behind this Buddha mask there lived fancies kindred to her own? Or—more probable!—the impudent Burke had hit upon this device for saying things, intimate things he could not have ventured otherwise.

Her gaze deepened into a frown.

“But, lady,” he persisted, “’tain’t the things I’ve mentioned—not even yer name—which counts so much as—” he paused calculatingly— “as that hair o’yours, that red hair.”

She was again annoyed.

“I told you,” he plunged on, “the kanakas bleaches their tops, tries their damndest t’ get up a kind of a red. Well, Miss Tree, hair like yours fills ’em with delight. They’ll be following y’round day and night same’s if y’was the Queen o’ Sheba.”

She decided to laugh once more.

“When the first white men’s ships laid a course into the islands the kanakas called ’em ‘sailing gods.’ I don’t know if that was because there was red-heads aboard, but I do know that, in two or three

groups anyhow, the old heathen gods come of a sort o' red-headed family."

He was silent for an interval, his oddly undeveloped features rather absurd in their maturity of thought.

"I suppose," he began at last, "y'haven't no idea how a Mary like you hits us islanders, kanaka or white?"

"Oh," he added with a shrugging gesture acquired from the natives, "you'd never guess—never." He hesitated in a diffidence strange to his nature. "But think, miss. Here we are, maybe ten, fifteen year never seeing any woman's face except these silly brown critters or perhaps the wife o' some missionary or trader, here too long—sickly, pale, done for. And then, of a sudden, along you comes; a—a vision. . . ."

He stammered in his effort to find words that should do justice to his sentiment, but not offend.

"All pink and white, peaches and cream," he went on recklessly; "a living being as beautiful as a painted picture. I ain't meaning no disrespect. But that, Miss Tree, as I reckon you'll understand, just fair knocks us, white and brown alike, dead in a row."

## CHAPTER VII

### PIRATES ARE CHRISTENED

"BUT do you really believe Palm Tree's pirate has been in gun battles and all that?" Constance Crawford was asking.

Palmyra's mother laughed skeptically. "I know Burke's a dead shot," she said, "because he told me so. Oh, a de-ad shot."

"A regular Robinson Slewso," suggested Van.

"And his Man Friday," added Constance.

Van held up his hand reprovingly. "Not Friday. 'Twas upon a Tuesday morning at just seven bells."

"Well then—Mr. Tuesday S. Bells."

Palmyra now spoke. "It's nonsense to take that little man seriously," she affirmed.

There was a general assent.

"When he says such things," she added, "it's like hearing a baby swear; awful, and you ought to be shocked, but at the same time comic. I delight in his efforts to make himself out something brigandish."

John Thurston had not joined in the accord. As he stood holding to the main shrouds, the big muscles of arm and shoulder swelling under his coat, he was never quite the yachtsman on an idle cruise; always, intangibly, a something of the construction engineer on his way to the Philippines to take charge of government work—the Rainbow to put him aboard

a transport at Honolulu, or, possibly if time permitted, at Guam.

"You're all probably right about Burke," he said presently. "But did you ever think how thoroughly we're bound down by the old conventional nonsense in character reading—phrenology and all that? A stripling develops a big square jaw. Presto—we recognize a determined character, a human bulldog. Really, it's only more bone in his jaw. And if he has a broad high forehead . . ."

"Solid ivory again," said Van.

"Palm's pirate couldn't be further from our fixed idea of a cutthroat: fierce moustachios, hawk nose, deepset, piercing, evil eyes. Yet in real life your cold-blooded, murdering brute is quite as likely to be some effeminate youth selling soda water with a lisp . . ."

"Never," said Van, "did I have soda water with a lisp."

Thurston's own face, despite his argument, would have been accepted by them all as the fighter's; the firm chin he derided, the level gaze, the resolute mouth. And these were reinforced by that self-reliant air gained through obstacles met and overcome.

And indeed, Palmyra's mind was now upon this fact, rather than the conversation. She had been wondering why everyone on board—everyone except Constance—wanted her to marry Van. She saw that they all did, and she felt their reasons must be good. Constance, of course, said it was only ancestors. The Tree family worshipped the family tree. "And Van," Constance had said commercially, "has the finest line of ancestors put out by

any house in America." It was nothing in Van personally, she had added. "John *does* things. But Van only *is* things."

The girl got up restlessly and stood at the rail, gazing out over the sunset sea. The gray cloud canopy of Sol's evening throne had lighted into pink. As John Thurston went on to amplify his thought, this deepened to become at last one molten mass of color.

Almost every small boy, said Thurston, passed through a period of seeming brutality. But when he chopped off the cat's tail he was not necessarily vicious. Merely, his intellect was developed only far enough to enable him to grasp the visible fact that the cat "acts so funny." Feeling no pain himself, he could not divine the cat's.

Most boys came through safely. But a few—utterly lacking in imagination, that power which enables us to put ourselves in the other fellow's place—stopped at this point. They continued evil through life; not mentally defective, but stone blind as far as this one gift of visualization. They could not see themselves, nor others. Limited to their own impulses, they could not judge these. Deprived of the faculty of imagination, they could be ruthless: were, in fact, the bloody men of history.

"Now," said John, "take Captain Kidd here . . ."

Van chuckled. "You mean Captain Kidder. Oh, what a nomdeplunder."

"I'm only windjamming," laughed Thurston. "I don't doubt our stowaway's a little man, sufficiently blunt as to his moral perceptions, but quite



harmless; making himself the hero of every gory story he picks up, eager to pose as a deep-sea bad man. But, still . . . ”

Palmyra glanced over her shoulder to scoff. “I could chase your Captain Kidder overboard with the feather duster,” she said.

The tone was light but it covered an idea that had just come to her concerning Ponapé Burke.

During this idle chatter the girl had felt, growing with every moment, a fuller perception of herself aboard this yacht. Never until now had she had a complete realization of the intimacy of this cruise with Van and John; of the incredible nearness of these two to her. She had been, all at once, appalled. Thus they would go on through every waking hour, unescapable in their demand upon her love.

Another girl might have enjoyed this conflict. But, emphatically, there was none of the coquette in Palmyra. The responsibility frightened her; for her own self, and for these fine fellows whose devotion she could not doubt.

She had had a suffocating sense that never, for one instant, could she protect herself from them and their problem. And then, as an inspiration, it had come to her that Ponapé Burke should be her refuge. Until she was sure about the two—oh, so sure!—she could always fly to him. She’d demand her pirate’s stories, and force Van and John also to sit and listen, no matter how rebellious.

As the Rainbow sailed across the waters upon a flaming path of gold, straight into the eye of the sun, the girl presently smiled. She had a sudden curiosity

concerning this Ponapé Burke in her new dependence upon him. She was eager to look at him. And she knew he would be perched on the forehatch, his brown man as ever at his elbow, silent, motionless, a pagan joss.

She whirled around to gaze, then caught her breath in dismay.

Unexpectedly, startlingly, the savage, unbeknown to any one of them all, had materialized himself here, was sitting almost within their circle. And his eyes were leveled upon her in a profound unblinking stare that seemed to have been going on for hours.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ENEMIES—AND FRIENDS

SOME sixteen days later in Mrs. Crawford's cabin a conference was under way.

"But, my dear, my dear," Palmyra's mother was protesting, "how can you say everything's going right, when Palm spends most of her time listening to that, that miserable stowaway; that—human toad. Her father is beside himself with anxiety."

The man made a deprecatory sound.

"That great oaf of a Thurston was enough," said the mother, "without these black and tan pirates."

The hostess smiled indulgently.

"Stowaways always work their passage," Mrs. Tree complained. "You could at least have had the Burke tramp kept so busy he mightn't interfere."

"I could, Grace," said Mrs. Crawford. "But in the first place he is, with his native, like a mountebank with a dancing bear. He entertains us. And in the second—it would have been the height of folly. Our greatest danger was in progressing too fast."

The mother sniffed.

"Events," said the hostess impressively, "have only too well shown that I, that *we* intervened just in time. Your daughter was on the verge of falling in love with John Thurston."

The father uttered a protest.

"But John has attractions," she retorted with emphasis. "I like him. Were he against anyone but Van. . . ."

She was thoughtful a moment. "The mere fact," she resumed, "our girl finds Captain Kidder so useful should show the danger she was in, the progress we've made. This is readjustment, Grace, readjustment. Without her knowledge she'd been falling in love. Now she's falling out. Grace, that pirate was sent us direct from heaven."

The mother sighed. "Oh, it would have been divine with just those two aboard—Palm and dear Van Buren; day after day together, serene, free from intrusion." She smiled dejectedly. "But if daughter had thought we were trying to force her to marry Van Buren. . . ." A gesture made her meaning clear. "And she'd never—I see it now; she'd never have come aboard if you hadn't insisted on *both* men."

"I don't see we've gained anything," complained the father.

"Quite the contrary," cried Mrs. Crawford. "Oh, quite. Setting is everything. That's why I proposed this voyage. Ashore, our girl was in absolute danger. Here—" she paused impressively—"she's being influenced toward Van every minute."

The man remained dubious.

"But where are your eyes?" demanded the hostess. "As I said in California, Van, with his refined personality, fits into the yacht's cabin like 'The Young King Charles' into a gilded frame. Thurston, on the contrary, is a great, robust being. He looks well enough ashore, but here, in these little

compartments, on this narrow deck, his hands and feet seem in the way.

"Van's a veteran of such cruises; himself at least a fair weather sailor. Essentially a product of the social life, he excels at cards, music, the dinner table. He has a fund of graceful small talk. John, on his part, is a silent man; out of his element. Cooped up here there's absolutely nothing he can do."

She paused to smile at them reassuringly. "I declare," she said, "I believe you two don't even see what's going on under your noses. But look at those men. Side by side through the long, idle hours under Palm Tree's inspection; Van busy with the things at which he's infinitely superior; John inarticulate, deprived of his one medium of expression—action.

"Surely, with John at his worst, Van at his best—need we fear?"

Meanwhile, Constance Crawford was forward at the Rainbow's bow, sailing through the tropic night upon enchanted waters.

For an interval the yacht would lie becalmed. Then a puff of pleasant air would touch the sea, sending the star reflections a-scatter, and from the vessel's prow would rise again a tinkling music.

In a day or so the Rainbow would drop anchor at Honolulu. Two weeks should have sufficed for the passage, but—Mrs. Crawford had desired a belated landfall.

Whenever, tonight, the yacht's pace would mend—the sea being alive with phosphorus—diagonals of

firefly green in the water at her bows would spread out like wings. Then, when the breeze failed, these would fall back again to her sides in little ripples and splashes of elfin light.

When John Thurston presently joined Constance, she looked up with a frown, faintly illumined by this faëry glow. "I was just thinking," she explained, "that Palm Tree doesn't at all realize what Captain Kidder may be getting into his mind. I believe the little fraud's quite puffed up over the idea he's made something of a conquest."

Thurston answered rather absently. "Anyhow," he said, "Burke's over the side at Honolulu and gone forever."

She assented.

John was silent for some time. Then: "I'd like to go, too," he burst out. "I, I've been trying to tell you I've taken your advice: asked her to become my wife."

She was gazing at the phosphorescent sea, her chin in her hand. "Yes," she answered without moving, "I know."

"She told you?" he exclaimed.

"No. You did."

He was chagrined. "I suppose I do look like that," he said.

"On the contrary. You've been splendid." She glanced up friendly. "But I still think it was the right thing to do. A week or two hence—absolutely no hope. Oh, why *didn't* you speak in California? She originally liked you best. I'm sure of it. Does still, if she only knew. Or," Constance added ruefully, "would if they'd let her alone."



He laughed with some bitterness. "Oh, I know what you mean. Take those theatricals."

She nodded.

"And that light comedy part your mother assigned me."

There was understanding in her gaze.

"I was," he cried, "as wooden as an Indian."

Unexpectedly she laughed; a laugh both of despair and of admiration for her mother's generalship. "Mamma," she said, "would think of a hundred ways of bringing out Van at his best, you at your worst. Oh, Mamma *always wins*."

He fell into a sudden petulance. "I guess she's right about me being too big for the yacht." Then a moment later: "But that's what life is, isn't it? A cramped deck, a small cabin and a lot of heavy weather?"

She assented and they lapsed into silence.

"I think Palm'll reject Van, too—at first," she said finally. "And in the meantime you'll have an advantage. Whatever is petty, ugly, in a man's nature comes out when he's refused. She is, of course, watching you. She'll be roused to the keenest sympathy for you; regret, perhaps almost remorse. So, John, just keep on as you are, being your own good honest old self; deep, kind, sensible, true."

The man flushed, humble under the compliment of her sincere liking.

In the silence that ensued, the fitful breeze died again and there came gliding alongside, one of the man-eating sharks that infest the tropics. From his fin, as it cleft the surface like the tower of a

submarine, little swirls of fire floated to set the sea in wake a-flame.

When Thurston spoke again it was apparently in an effort to get into a more cheerful vein.

"Seemingly," he said, "I have another well-wisher aboard."

With a pocket flashlight he made visible for her a small object of woven fibre: a bark cord wound round a packet perhaps two inches square.

"When I came on deck this morning," he explained, "Olive incarnated himself before me. Looked about furtively, jerked my coat-tails up, fastened this round my waist. Then he gave me a friendly grin and vanished."

"But," she puzzled, "what is it?"

"Inside there's a bit of fine mat, seven hairs and a tooth."

"'A rag, a bone and a hank of hair,'" she quoted.

It was, he explained, an amulet, the product of one of the savage islands. Olive, according to Burke, on coming into possession of it had bound it on in a spirit of levity. But next day the crew had been attacked and Olive escaped seemingly certain death. Naturally, the amulet had been given the credit.

"But, but why . . ."

Thurston smiled a little sadly. "Thought I needed it, I guess. If you could see through me so easily, I dare say even he . . ."

"But seriously?"

"How should I know? I believe I didn't laugh that day—you recollect?—when Burke said Olive was angry because Palm Tree asked about his

tattooed name? Can't think of anything else, unless it was some tobacco."

"And Burke?"

"Says it's just one of those quick, unreasoned native likings."

She was thoughtful. "At any rate," she said finally, "he seems to be wishing you good luck."

She examined the amulet again with an absent attention. Then, the smile fading from her lips: "John, promise me you will not leave the Rainbow at Honolulu."

## CHAPTER IX

### UNCHRISTIAN SCIENCE

THE yacht was pushing on at her best pace, setting up such a lively stir at her prow as to achieve the small, private rainbow for which she had been named.

Presently, with a faint motor-like buzz and hum of wing fins, a squadron of flying fish made straight for the craft, and two fell upon her deck.

Ponapé Burke picked up one of these for Palmyra's inspection. As she examined it he asked, with an effect somehow of being more interested than the subject warranted:

"Would y'think, Miss Tree, a little fish like that could kill a grown man?"

She exclaimed incredulously.

He tossed the fish overboard, looked at his hands with some distaste. It was not the least striking peculiarity of this stowaway that he was almost fussily neat about himself and his surroundings.

"I don't mean a white man, a Christian," he explained. "A flying fish couldn't kill them, for they ain't got the power o' belief. Not like the kanakas in heathen times. Panga—no! Faith could do what it liked with them. Lord, they could believe just anything."

Van smiled broadly. "Though only nominally Christian," he warned, "don't expect too much of us."

Captain Kidder grinned amiably. "Miss Tree, anyway, she believes it."

He always found her his best listener. He had a habit of turning to her, apparently without conscious volition, at the important points.

"Christianity don't seem t'take aholt like the old heathen ideas," he now went on. "'Twas awful the power they had."

It struck her there was something in this subject that fascinated him. He must have brought it in half a dozen times lately.

"I used t' know an old-timer in Samoa, a Portugee. He was sorry . . ."

Burke paused, obviously to give importance to the word "sorry." But when he spoke again it was only to tell them that his first island home had been in Samoa, and that the native words which flavored his speech were still usually of that lingo.

"You said 'sorry'?" prompted the girl.

His undeveloped physiognomy registered a gleam of satisfaction. He had evidently wanted her to ask. "That Portugee," he explained, "sure was a *tamaloa* who'd inform you a flying fish could kill a man."

Someone laughed.

"I tell y'he could," affirmed Burke with heat. "He done it himself."

In the Samoa of old every family had its own god, its *aitu*. Your family deity, say, lived in every tree blossom or in every wild boar. If it were tree blossoms, other families might use these as they chose, but you must, from the branches needed, cut off each flower and lay it reverently aside. Or if the

boar ruled, your neighbors could kill and eat as many as they liked, without offense to you or injury to themselves. But you—never. That was absolutely forbidden. It meant death through the vengeance of the god himself.

“This Portugee,” explained Burke, “once killed a big buck kanaka by tricking him into breaking the *tabu*. The fellow’s *aitu* was flying fish—that’s what made me think o’ it here. The Portugee cooked up a mess loaded with it; fooled the sucker into eating it. Then he *told* him; showed him the heads, fins. Within one month that man was dead. Plum believed t’ death!”

As the Rainbow forged ahead, the bow waves, shouldered out amongst the seas, created knots of frothing water that seemed to struggle, like goslings, to keep up with this old duck of a craft.

Ponapé Burke, on his part, must have been engrossed by his subject. Yet, as he talked, he was never unaware of yacht and sea. Once he stopped to scowl at the helmsman; again he fidgeted over the sails. Several times he warned them—seemingly without a glance—that a sea was about to come tumbling inboard to swash along the deck. Far better than any protestations on his part, did this unconscious manifestation of the habit of command prove that he had, indeed, been master of his own craft.

He spoke a little grimly. If they didn’t think a big, husky brute like this here—indicating Olive—could sit down and believe himself to death, what about split *ififi* twigs on Vatiavanu? That was the regular way to croak a guy down there—still was.



You hid a split twig or two in the thatch of his house or up a nearby tree. Then if he walked under it some day he was a goner. Any sick man knew it was twigs. If someone found them, he got well. Otherwise, he died. Yes, sir, dozens of 'em.

He looked from one to another of his auditors; began presently to laugh. An idea so good, evidently, that he seemed really reluctant to share it. At last, however, between tittering outbreaks, he leaned forward confidentially to Palmyra and asked:

"Wouldn't it have been just Christmas for them poor devils a-dying o' twigs if some *tamaloa* had hove alongside with a sure-fire antidote?"

"And *did* the medicine men bring their own twigs and pretend to find them?" inquired the amused Thurston.

Burke burst into a guffaw. He had, evidently, a curious gusto in this idea of knavery and helpless superstition. And his laugh now—as was so often the case—managed in some obscure way to add a touch, as of evil.

But shortly his amusement began to tinge with contempt. "It makes me sick, though," he resumed, "the way those *chaumaro*, medicine men, wasted their chance. There they had that stupend'us power o' belief, and what'd they do with it? Why, nothing; just nothing at all."

At the rate the Rainbow was sailing it was evident the yacht must soon make a landfall. Indeed, all during Captain Kidder's talk, some one or other of his circle had been turning away with the glasses to seek for the first shadowy silhouette of the peaks of Oahu.

But Ponapé's rancor, a laughably real and personal hostility toward those feckless heathen, held him to his theme. He progressed from a good-humored disdain into what was certainly an active irritation. He could not bear to think of those wasted opportunities.

Take, for instance, the strangling of widows at a funeral. He was aggrieved, not at the horror of the thing—that appeared scarcely to have engaged his attention—but at its thriftlessness.

"There's an island for you, Miss Tree," he interjected. "Tanna o' the New Hebrides, as I've mentioned so much. A great place."

A chief might lie dying, his wives around him. And, even in the Tanna of today as to its darkest corner, there would, while his eyes glazed, break out among the women a controversy as to which should pass to be with him on beyond. "It shall be me," one would cry. "No, me—only me," from another.

"Beg t'be croaked and thrown into the grave," marvelled Burke. "Sore as a hornet unless somebody accommodates: then die smiling. There's faith for you. *E aupito malosi le taofi!* Where's yer Christian who's running round teasing someone t'knock him into heaven with a ball bat?"

He paused in a wish to be sure of their attention.

"But what gets me," he summed up in a tone almost comically tragic, "is why choke a perfectly good school o' widows t'death when y'could just as well frame 'em t'work fourteen hours a day on the plantation."

He sat regarding Palmyra in what was undisguisedly an effort to gauge her interest. The subject

was trivial to everyone else, but a something within him appeared to demand a real response on her part.

The girl, in turn, had a slight sense of revulsion. Was it believable that, of all this man had experienced in the wide Pacific, nothing had so held his thought as this life-and-death power of pagan belief, its sordid possibilities?

She might have voiced her distaste, but at this moment there rang down the cry, "Land ho!" In the rush forward that ensued he raised a hand to detain her.

"Excuse me, Miss," he said. "Those others . . ." A slightly contemptuous gesture. "They wasn't really interested. They're tame. That's what—tame. But you? Why, you're different. Y'sure wasn't intended for their little ol' birdcage kind o' life. Nature meant y'for something lively-like, something up and doing."

The girl laughed. "Nature," she said, "meant me for a pirate."

Captain Kidder's eyes opened wide, then wrinkled shut in amusement.

"It's in my blood," she affirmed. "First, a Norseman ravaging the coasts of England. Then, a British admiral ravaging everything else. And lastly, old Captain Ebenezer, with John Paul Jones, descending once more upon the coasts of England."

Burke grinned in admiration.

"Ah, yes, indeed, Captain Burke," she said mischievously. "Pirate blood. I'd love the smell of powder, the sight of gore. Did civilization not enmesh me, I'd be a buccaneer—a man like you."

He was delighted: pleased with the humor, the spirit of her pose; flattered at the bold character with which she endowed him.

"Oh, no, miss," he denied genially. "I ain't no buccaneer. Not me. Just a plain sailorman, trying t'make an honest living." He tittered with juvenile effect. "In the time o' Bully Hayes," he added a trifle sentimentally, "things was different. They sure was. But Lord bless you, he was the last o' the South Sea pirates. Today, young lady. . . ." He allowed himself a grimace and a wink. "Today the Pacific's as mild as syrup in a saucer."

The girl turned to go; then paused, laughing back at him over her shoulder. "You, Ponapé Burke," she said; "you and I—I'm afraid we were born too late."

## CHAPTER X

### ISLANDS COME AND PIRATES GO

As the Rainbow raised the panorama of dead craters that stands, rather barren, above the verdant town of Honolulu, none upon her decks was so expectant as Palmyra Tree. For from the chaff of Ponapé Burke's narration she had winnowed the clean grain of beauty and romance that is the life of this island world of the palm tree. Her imagination was a-glow.

Today of the islands she knew only the multitude of dots on Captain Pedersen's charts that swarmed across the stupendous emptiness of the Pacific. Tomorrow these would materialize under her very gaze: coral atolls, perhaps, green wreaths laid in memoriam upon the brow of mountains long since sunk into old ocean in the eternal sleep; or living crags, rising from the turquoise depths beneath, into the turquoise depths above; their feet hid in the white smother of surf, their heads in the white of cloud, their mountain shoulders clothed, to the enchanted eyes of the voyager, in that tapestry of the tree tops which is vivid and regal with patterning blossom of purple and gold and the fire of the flame tree.

Through the gateway of Honolulu she was to sail on into this world where Happiness is queen. While, elsewhere, Tragedy comes masterfully as of right,

here he seems ever an intruder; tiptoeing, apologetic, brought by unprecedented circumstance; begging permission to slip in and finish the unfortunate business—and then, forever away.

She was to sail across the trackless sea as those brown mariners of old. Coming, no one knows whence, they struck out into the unknown; sailing their hundred-man canoes without chart or compass, discovering and peopling the islands; traversing, no one knows how, the length and breadth of the Pacific in voyages that would have shamed the Norsemen; voyages doubly wonderful now when the last of the great canoes lie mouldering upon the sands and the navigators no longer venture beyond sight of their mountain tops.

As the girl, thus deep in reverie, stood watching the distant peaks, she became aware of a presence at her side. Turning, she started upon encountering the brown man Olive. Confronted so unexpectedly, in such mood, by her first representative of this ocean world, she had an odd sense of him that he indeed was a genii; materialized aboard for the sole purpose of creating these enchanted isles for her out of magic nothing.

Until now this remote being had initiated no movement toward her, though she had been unpleasantly aware that he kept her under the gaze of those strange brown-shot eyes. And so long continued his statuesque silences, so infrequent his animated gesticulatory utterance, that the spoken word on his part seemed unnatural, almost spectacular; as if he were already—save only through Burke—forever beyond communication with living man.



It was only a little less than startling then when he tried to bridge the chasm—direct to her.

He gave tongue to a few syllables, paused perplexed, then fell back upon pantomime. Raising an index finger to his breast, to indicate himself as the object of the action, he made a simple yet graphic gesture as of tossing himself overboard. The hour of departure had come. Soon Burke and he would go over the side and, forever, into oblivion.

Palmyra smiled. She tried to overcome her aversion, to respond to his attempted farewell. As he had done, she moved to speak, found herself helpless, returned to the smile.

The brown man, thus countenanced, laid the square finger upon her own breast. The digit had assumed the function of a personal pronoun. Having thus identified the girl as the being of the drama, he raised his hand, with extended arm, straight over his head. She thought he invoked the One above. But she gave this up when she saw that he waggled, fluttered the fingers.

When she shook her head, regretfully, he abandoned the upraised hand as futile. He brought out a ring. Palmyra Tree had never seen such a ring: tortoise shell inlaid with silver. There were letters on it; seemingly one word, thrice repeated and separated by discs—the word “N-i.”

Olive pointed to the letters, then to the girl and once more held aloft the hand with the moving fingers. But again she shook her head.

The brown man stood baffled. Then, grinning anew, he hurried away forward.

He was an impressive figure, now that the chill of

the coast had given way to an ever balmier air. The plow shoes had been the first to go. Other garments had followed, until now the copper skin of his torso shone through the meshes of a single short-sleeved undergarment, and his lower limbs were encased only in overalls rolled to the knee.

The savage, presently returning, thrust into the girl's hands a lithograph, an advertisement of Egyptian cigarettes. She wondered if he thought its colors pretty, meant it as a gift.

But he pointed to the silver letters of the ring and pronounced the word "Ni," then to her with a second "Ni," and to the picture with a third. He dropped the ring into her fingers.

At last the girl who was named Palmtree understood. For there in the advertisement was a palm-tree. The upraised hand had symbolized the palm—herself. Olive but sought to give her a ring with her name upon it.

When the hour of leavetaking came, however, he seemed to have re-entered the silence, and the farewells devolved upon Ponapé Burke.

As the little stowaway reached her in his round he achieved a simple eloquence of feeling. "You've been kind t'me, miss," he said. "I ain't a-going t'forget it. Nor *you*."

She shook hands with an unassumed friendliness. "I'm sure," she said, "we shall see you again."

Sharply he glanced at her, as if eager to know whether she really had such a hope. Then he shrugged, island-wise. "It's a large ocean, lady. Don't go trying for t'sight me out there on beyond.

"With you and me it's just lights passing in the dark; a hail, and then—nothing."

A minute later Palmyra's pirates were swinging over the side into their boat.

Van Buren Rutger, an amused onlooker, now stepped to the girl and caught up into view the hand that wore the ring. "Engaged," he said, "and parted. All in one crowded hour."

She was following with her eyes the departing stowaways. "I'm sorry to lose Captain Kidder," she said at length unsmiling. "He amused me. But I, I'm really quite glad that native creature has gone."

Van laughed. "Oh, come, come," he protested. "Remember that Captain Kiddo, the world's greatest bunkaneer, has been painting his brown man black. 'Tis not the shepherd of the lamb who's the hero, but the lion tamer."

She rewarded him with a smile. "Most of us never outgrow a horror of spiders and woolly worms—the legacy of our first babyish impression. Mine—because he popped out at me so that night—seems to be a wild and woolly man. But . . ."

Van was looking at the ring with an expression which caught her attention. "What is it?" she asked.

He made a gesture. "Your ring," he said, "may mean nothing at all, or . . ."

She waited.

"Fashioning these rings for globetrotters is an island industry. Also, parting gifts are a custom. But—" he paused with a little distaste—"you will observe that he did not make Mrs. Crawford a ring, or—" a smile—"one for me."

She glanced quickly at the tortoise band, then up to see if he intended a joke. But there was now no light of humor in his eyes. "I shouldn't like to think," he explained, "that this brunette had achieved an infatuation for you."

She turned, displeased, toward the harbor and her departing pirates. Burke raised his hat jauntily. But it was rather at the savage the girl looked. Over the white man's shoulder he seemed to be watching her to the end with that strangely expressionless but intent stare.

Palmyra faced abruptly away and snatched the ring from her finger. "Yes," she whispered, "I, I'm certainly glad to have seen the last of *him*."

## CHAPTER XI

### AT THE RAINBOW'S END

ONE short week ashore and the good ship Rainbow was at sea again. Bound she was now for the heart of Oceanica, the Equatorial isles of Micronesia. It was a duty, Mrs. Crawford said, to get on at once into that real Pacific where native life has not withered before the encroaching white man and his Asiatic. As the yacht was to put John Thurston aboard a Philippine transport at Guam, only a little southing, said the hostess, would take them in among the Gilberts, the Marshalls, the Carolines, that Milky Way of atolls along the Line, of which Ponapé Burke had talked so alluringly. And, being thus near, did they not owe it to themselves to acquire first-hand knowledge of a subject at one time so much in the news of the day—the Japanese mandate?

What Mrs. Crawford did *not* explain was that the real duty, as she saw it, lay in depriving Thurston's long legs of a chance, in this less cramped setting of Honolulu, to snap back into perspective; that the thing the voyagers owed to themselves was an uninterrupted three weeks more of this gilded frame into which Van Buren Rutger fitted like "The Young King Charles."

Nor was an actual change in course attendant. The Rainbow, in truth, had sailed under sealed or-

ders, via Honolulu, for a port not yet even noted on the Hydrographic office charts as "location reported," or "position doubtful." She was bound for the waters, sweet, usually placid between flowery shores—yet now and then subject to violent tempest—of Betrothal Sound; with eventual destination, snug in berth, in that haven—Matrimony.

But the orders would remain sealed until the opening of Palmyra's heart, and thus far she had refused to look within and see what was written there. By rejecting both her lovers—Van shortly after John—she had gained a reprieve from that question as to whether she were in love with one man or just dandy good pals with two.

The peaks of Oahu sank back into the *moana*, the deep, deep ocean, whence they had risen. One day, two days, four, six upon a temperamental sea; a whole week of heavy skies and rain and storm seemed to have carried the girl no further.

A second week came and went; a week of summer sea and lusty trades and flying yacht. But still no answer.

The third week came and neared its end. Intermittent now the breeze, for they touched the equatorial zone of light and variable airs. A whole day through, perhaps, the Rainbow would scarcely move.

But if it began to appear as though the yacht itself might never again make port, far different here at last with Palmyra. For slowly, unconsciously, she had been responding to the conditions created by the wily Mrs. Crawford. As the breeze, with each knot of westing, had been sinking more dangerously into the doldrums, the breath of her own feel-



ing had stirred, risen fresh, fair, constant, until it reached the deep sweep of a maiden's first acknowledged love.

Gladly she was confessing it now, this belated recognition of love for the man of her parents' choice, Van Buren Rutger.

Indeed, so did the conviction of love grow with each hour that, scarcely, could she longer concede the possibility of a time when—if she would have admitted it—she had not felt herself in love. She was, in fact, questioning the sincerity of her former questioning.

And, unfairly, with this doubt came a fear that she must have treated John Thurston abominably. It seemed to her there must have been, in some unrecognized perversity, a wilful and wanton intent to keep him dangling. With each moment that she gave herself more convincingly up to love, her pity for Thurston grew.

Poor John—who loved but was not beloved! How brave he was, how uncomplaining, how determinedly cheerful when he thought her eyes upon him; how dejected when she caught him unawares, silent in some angle of the deck, every line of face and figure eloquent of misery. Her heart went out to him in tender sympathy. Why had she let him go on, day after day, when she herself must, *must* have known!

But when, on the twenty-second evening out from Honolulu—tomorrow they were to sight their first atoll—the hour came for the formal announcement of her betrothal, the girl was radiantly happy.

True, at the moment when Mrs. Crawford spoke,

it was upon the face of John Thurston that Palmyra's eyes rested, and she could but wince at the flash of pain there revealed. But no girl in love can, on her betrothal night, long be unhappy over the face of a rejected suitor. And perhaps it is not given to woman, even to so tender a one as this, to be wholly miserable at the realization that, as she holds the hand of her beloved, never to relinquish it, she is still sure of the devotion of the other man—unto death.

So it was, that night, as Palmyra lay asleep in her stateroom, her body gently moving with the lift and fall of the yacht in the mid-Pacific calm, there was a tender smile upon her lips.

And the tender smile was still lingering, in an alluring warmth and sweetness and beauty, when the Rainbow, caught all unaware by a sudden squall, came down with a crash upon the teeth of a reef—that should not have been there.



PART TWO

THE PIGEON OF NOAH



## CHAPTER XII

### THE WEAK AND THE STRONG

ON a craft such as the Rainbow interest naturally centers about the navigation. The guests gather round the captain—here no liner's autocrat—while he makes his observations, works out the day's run, explains the navigating problems.

What better then for Mrs. Crawford in her amiable intrigue than to set up Van Buren Rutger as a gentleman navigator? How more pleasantly important than, handsome, graceful, jaunty in his white uniform, he poised with sextant to take the sun, or bent over the charts with Constance and the Wampolds *and* Palmyra?

In so featuring Van as a yachtsman—he was no more than a fairly competent amateur—the hostess had meant that Pedersen, in the background, should unostentatiously check up on his work at every point.

But . . .

The sailing master was a man vain, self-important, jealous of his prerogatives, touchy as to his dignity. Until that recent dangerous illness this temperament had been held sufficiently within restraint. But now, in his physical decadence, he was become childishly sensitive, continually subject to unsuspected affront.

Not understanding Mrs. Crawford's motive, he chose to regard the arrangement as an imputation



upon his seamanship, his fitness—which he himself doubted—longer to command.

Van soon discovered then that this sick and sulky old man was only making an outward show; in reality having nothing whatever to do with the navigation, leaving the fate of the yacht absolutely in Van's own hands.

A certain inability to take a stand in anything unpleasant, difficult, to make up his mind and act in an emergency, kept Van at first from telling the hostess. Later he continued with an object. He knew she did not truly rely on him in this showy fraud of navigation; he suspected Palmyra was not deceived. Knowing his own weakness, he had the weak man's fear of seeing that knowledge reflected in the faces of others. Therefore, he would, without aid, sail the Rainbow to and through the Line island groups. And then, when at last he told the girl, she could not but admit and admire his performance.

Disastrously for this plan, the Pacific, where it strains through the clustering atolls, is combed into currents that cause even the habituated navigator not infrequently to make his landfalls many miles out. And here, where Van ventured in among those vedettes of Micronesia marked on the charts with a "P D" (position doubtful), the equatorial current was setting the Rainbow down at the rate of nearly fifty knots a day.

On the night of the wreck, Van—really heroic in persisting against a quaking unconfidence that kept him often awake—had stolen on deck in the mid-watch to reassure himself. His first glance told

him the clouds were gathering for a squall; his second that, in the calm, the man at the wheel and the lookout forward were asleep. A relaxed discipline had been quick in result.

Like most unadventurous persons, Van rebelled at being thought timid. Before rousing the watch he paused to make sure the clouds meant wind. As he studied the sky he gradually became aware of a low sound as of an express train far away. Startled, he swept the sea; then laughed in self-contempt. More than once lately in dreams or waking he had sprung up at that fancied sound of surf. The yacht should not have land aboard until late the next day. To call out there was an island a-lee, if there were none, would be to make himself absurd.

Staring now up at the blackening sky, again off into the gloom of sea, he stood, balanced in suspense between his fear of storm and leeshore, and his dread of ridicule. For this first time Van held life and death in his hands—and could not decide what to do.

He belonged among those in the social scale to whom living comes, to use the commercial language of the day, as a semi-finished product. He was accustomed, by right of inheritance, to look on at existence while others went out into it and did the rough work for him; brought him a processed article of being, better fitted to his own refinement than raw life itself.

Even the war had been no exception. While Thurston was winning his way up to a lieutenant-colonelcy with the engineers in France, Van had been a swivel chair captain in Washington. To do him justice, he had not made application for this safe

detail; had, in fact, laid his plans for work in the trenches. But the past dominated. A civilian general, newly created, had snapped him up as an aide. His acquaintanceship and social standing were of tremendous value to this personage, and there he had stuck, despite his, perhaps not very despairing, protests.

The sound of surf being at its minimum after two days' calm, the first breath of the squall was upon the yacht before Van was galvanized into action by discovering, broad on the port bow, a dim, low-lying something against the sky—the silhouette of palms.

But even as the doomed Rainbow thus lay between hammer and anvil, she could have been extricated had not Captain Pedersen himself gone to pieces. As, oddly, many men entering upon evil seem utterly unprepared for, aghast at, its logical consequence, so now this sailing master—who had staked the lives of women against his perversity—collapsed. In the one precious remaining moment a bewildered crew tried to execute incoherent orders, while the yacht was beaten down upon the waiting coral.

At the initial alarm John Thurston had gained the deck before any of the others. Events of the evening had made sleep impossible. Knowing that the auxiliary would be put to emergent use he ran toward the motor. When the man in charge reached his post John had the engine shipped and ready. When it stalled—another manifestation of relaxed discipline—his knowledge started it.

Following the crash upon the reef, Thurston picked himself up and scrambled to the deck just as a sea

came roaring aboard. Saved by a spring into the rigging he waited a chance to reach Pedersen, whose condition he had sensed. Seizing the sailing master he whirled him round.

"Your're drunk," he cried. "Or, or crazy."

Pedersen mumbled faltering denial.

"You let your ship get into danger. Let her drive ashore. Now yield the deck to the mate."

The other quailed under the steely light in Thurston's eye.

"Get below."

Pedersen turned and went stumbling aft, so perceptibly feeble that one wondered how the fact had gone unrecognized.

In the smashing contact with the reef one of the blocks of the main tackle had fetched away and was, with every struggle of the loose canvas, thrashing about. When the dazed sailing master went groping aft this bludgeon swung at his head as if even the inanimate fabric of the wreck would avenge itself upon him. In another step he would have been brained. But Thurston, hurling himself through the air, swept the old man aside.

Jumping up, he shouted: "Where's the mate? Tietjens, ahoy!"

But Tietjens lay with a broken leg and unconscious from a blow on the temple.

"I'll take charge," Thurston announced.

Pedersen was carried into the forecastle. The pumps showed that the wreck was taking water badly. Such boats as could be launched were got ready.

The men obeyed unquestioningly. They liked,

respected Thurston. He knew little of ships but they recognized in his voice the quality of command.

During the hours which followed it might well have seemed to Palmyra that the wreck had been arranged for the sole purpose of bringing out the difference between John Thurston and Van Buren Rutger.

Where Van was sunk in self-accusing misery, Thurston's spirits were buoyant. The man was serene, methodical, busy. The disaster, with its demand for work, had come almost as a relief. Mrs. Crawford had truly said his medium of expression was action. And he had action at last; intense, vital. In fighting to save the woman he loved he could forget, for the moment, that he had lost her forever.

Where Van was soon sodden with fatigue, John seemed fresher with every hour.

Doing the work of any two men, he was everywhere. Now he would be aft, where the surf was making a clean breach over the wreck, assuming the most dangerous part in getting up such stores as might be saved in emergency. Again he would be forward, where the deck was comparatively dry, cheering the hands into renewed hope of heaving the yacht off at daybreak; devising gear with which to staunch her wounds.

And somehow he found time, in and between, to set Tietjens' leg in a way which would have brought commendation from any surgeon; to reassure the women that the wreck would not break up or slide off the reef into deep water; even—this immediately after the crash—to help Van play a worthy



part in the eyes of the one who had given him her love.

By bringing together wind and yacht and reef, nature had but indulged another of those leering coincidences with which she delights in showing up the human machine. Scarcely was the Rainbow hard upon the coral than out came the stars to twinkle their derision, leaving the wreck free of storm, though battered by the sea that had been raised.

It had been decided to leave the women in the cabin where they had been penned, rather than risk the ugly surf that broke about the after companion.

But Van, in his self-accusing frenzy, was conscious only that he had placed his betrothed in the hands of death, that he must save her. Realizing she was still below, he made a blind rush aft. Half way, a sea struck him, carried him bruising along the deck, left him in the scuppers, bleeding.

Again he rushed toward the cabin companionway. Before anyone noticed, he had thrown it open in the face of another sea. A second later he was swept down its steps by the flooding water. In his desperate concentration upon his purpose, oblivious to everything else, he had rendered the cabin uninhabitable, and only quick work saved the girl's mother from drowning.

Catching up Palmyra he struggled back and out again on the deck. Only then, at a warning cry, did he seem consciously to perceive what force it was that delivered these blows. Stopping short, he looked back. A crest reared above the wreck, gathering itself like some animate beast for the spring. Van,



horror stricken, started one way, another; stood frozen in his tracks.

In an instant the sea would have been upon him. From that slippery listing deck both man and girl would, in all chance, have been carried overboard to death.

In the blinding roar, all she knew was that Van's arms were round her, that he held her safe. Never did she suspect it was to another pair of arms she owed her life.

Of all these revelations, these manifestations of the weakness of Van Buren Rutger, the strength of John Thurston, the girl noted none. On the night of her betrothal she would scarcely have been like, under any circumstances, to draw comparisons. And here darkness and groping confusion and the voice of waters conspired with Thurston himself to hide the truth.

Palmyra's love weathered the storm, unquestioning, serene.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A WAIL AND A SAIL

DAYLIGHT made clear two facts: the Rainbow had struck in such a way that it would be impossible to get her off; the island was uninhabited.

The silhouetted palms, perhaps a score of them, were found to grow on the largest of three islets lying strung along the reef on the further side of a small triangular lagoon. As with so many of these formations, only the weather face, where centuries of trade-wind seas had broken off and piled up the coral growth, was high enough to support vegetation. On the other two exposures, as where the yacht lay, the reef, though sufficient to enclose and protect the lagoon, was itself awash.

As the exploratory boat, taking the women ashore, rose and fell on the water, the three islets in the distance also seemed to rise and fall. When the boat sank into a hollow of the sea the islets also sank, as if gone forever. And then, unexpectedly, as the boat shot up, they also shot up, their palms first thrusting through the brine, to be followed by the verdure of the undergrowth and the sparkling beach of sand.

As the boat, rounding a spur of reef that covered the passage into the lagoon, opened out the largest island from the sea, Palmyra burst into an exclamation of delight. With the surf budding and flowering all about it, its immaculate sands alive with

light, its emerald crown of palms fluttering in the newborn breeze, the island seemed to float; not prosaically upon the water, but—ethereal, beautiful as mirage to desert wanderer athirst—in that enchanted nowhere between the incomparable blue of sea and the incomparable blue of sky.

As the boat pulled in for the passage, the turquoise of the ocean faded—the bottom of powdered coral rising toward the surface—into a pale green. The girl looked down through water as transparent as air itself to a wood of coral trees.

And the fish! A cry of astonishment. Here were a score, brilliantly skyblue as the dome above, patterned with pinheads of gilding such as adorns the porcelains of Limoges. Or, if you liked, fish in cerise and orange and red, fish with beaks and fish with horns. These rainbow creations, motionless, hanging suspended among the coral branches, made her think of grotesque Chinese lanterns.

And then the shore, where the glitter and glare of that white island was almost incandescence. There was no soil; only coral pulverized by the waves or lying about in heaped fragments. These broken limestone branches, as thick as her wrist, were bleached like bones. In the flame of sun and giving forth a clinking sound, they seemed more the product of a furnace than of the sea.

But if there was no grass, a cool vine softened the dazzle of reflected light and under the shade of the young cocoanut palms and a clump of pandanus the breeze was pleasant enough.

Close at hand, against the outer edge of the reef upon which the islet had been accumulated, the live

sea boiled, now bursting into foam, now burying the coral rim in a solid rush of green. Contrasting with this turmoil, the lagoon, on the lee side, lay so still as to mirror the swarm of birds that clamored overhead.

In between, the crest of land rose to perhaps eight feet above tide level.

The girl turned to John and Van. "It is pretty," she said, "but—cruel." She felt a first little shiver of realization. "There is nothing upon it. No shelter, no food."

Van gave her a haggard look. "And," he said, "there's not one drop of water. When we've used what we bring ashore. . . ."

Thurston whirled upon him. "Don't!" he cried. "Don't dare tell them that. We'll filter salt water through this sand or rig a condenser with junk from the wreck."

Palmyra had not been consciously aware of Thurston's leadership until hours after the catastrophe. Her attitude was typical of them all; perhaps even of Thurston himself. There had been something to do; the stronger nature had asserted itself. And the ship's company, acquiescing thus automatically, with scarcely any registered sense of change, paid him its highest compliment.

The girl had not thought to wonder why Thurston, rather than her fiancé, had been chosen. John's leadership was a matter of course. He had a reputation for efficiency in handling men. Van had had neither occasion nor opportunity.

Here spoke her good common sense. But in the circumstance that Van was not one whit belittled in

her eyes, that her ideal of him suffered not at all, one read a certain limitation of outlook. Thus far her being had derived from the comfortable heroism of the counting house. Never had existence itself hung, dependent upon courage, quickness of wit, the power of brawn. The past had given her no cause to place a value upon those attributes John possessed and Van lacked.

If, instinctively, she had begun to reach out toward an expression of life more in keeping with her own sturdy nature, she was as yet unconscious of the fact. And, being unaware of Mrs. Crawford's original plot, she could hardly be expected to note that the wreck had reversed the situation; that where, before, John had been put to disadvantage, now Van had been given the role he could not play.

The inevitable had occurred between these men. As Thurston had risen to leadership, so Van—physically exhausted, gnawed by remorse, visibly confessing to the full of self contempt his utter inability to meet the crisis—had sunk to his place as a private in the ranks.

But love is blind, and Captain Pedersen's collapse had enabled the girl to lay the blame all on him.

Palmyra did not see, suspect.

They were easily cheered that first day. True, the island bore no sign of native visitation. But with their launch they could easily reach the nearest inhabited lagoon, or they could even build a seaworthy craft from material of the wreck, were they not certain some passing sail would soon take them off.

Thus the first day. But when the second came and went and the third dawned upon an empty ocean, they began to despond. At night a beacon fire had blazed forth its appeal—they must soon turn to the Rainbow for fuel—and by day the launch waited to overhaul any passerby. But of what avail these upon a sea where no one seemed to venture.

And then, at midday, from the wreck across the lagoon, there boomed out the signal gun. A sail!—a sail!!—a sail!!!

Briefly they were sceptical. Twice already hope had fooled them. But soon they could no longer doubt: a two-masted schooner and upon a course that must lay the island aboard.

Rapidly the deliverer rose from the sea. A vessel of no great tonnage, she sailed with noticeable speed. Weather-stained as to canvas, she was still a thousand times more beautiful to the castaways than ever their gem-like Cleopatra's barge of an atoll. And this though they did not half appreciate the miracle of rescue within three days, let alone three months.

As the schooner bore down upon them she broke out the American colors. When she was abreast of their position she came about and then hove to in lee of the reef. A boat was lowered.

Palmyra, through her glasses, saw that three men got into this boat. Two of them were undoubtedly native seamen. The third, who had been reconnoitering from the crosstrees, appeared to be a white man.

She watched them as they pulled rapidly in through the passage and across the lagoon. Then,



in astonishment, she lowered the binoculars to stare at Van Buren Rutger, who, capering about, had emitted a war whoop. Van, in this short hour, had regained all the spirits lost in three whole days.

He was dancing over the coral clinkers now like a musical comedy buffoon.

“By the Great God Cash!” he cried. “If it isn’t li’l old Captain Kidder!”

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PIGEON OF NOAH

ALMOST from the moment Ponapé Burke came running up the sands Palmyra perceived a difference.

Was it that the ridiculous habiliments of the Rainbow had given way to the starched white of the tropical ship's master?

Or was it that she missed the obtrusive humility? No longer a stowaway, he spoke to Mrs. Crawford as one master of craft to another; a full note of equality.

Or did he glow with an honest elation of service? Shocked as he'd been at the poor old Rainbow—*aw-e-e*, but that *was* a sight!—there'd been a joy in it, too. It'd have been perfect if they hadn't—he pointed to the launch on the lagoon—had that splendid power boat there. For the other boats, as he remembered, weren't up to much, wouldn't have done for a try. The castaways would have been absolutely helpless. And really, he'd have liked it so. Only then could he feel he'd repaid in full their saving him.

This was a bit florid. Perhaps, after all, the fact might be no more than a juvenile sort of vanity in himself as master of that swift sail; a vanity bubbling over at unexpectedly finding its audience. And he must have had some vague hope of such a reunion as this. For he was saying now that, on the Rainbow, he'd withheld the fact he had a vessel of his own

lying-up at Honolulu; withheld it on the chance of "surprising 'em somewhere out here."

There could be no question of his fond pride in that fast craft. As he talked he could hardly keep his eyes off her. Not so much for style, perhaps, but, *ta-a-alofa*, how she could sail. Had they noticed the way she cut through the water? the lines of her? the sheer of her bow? And had they seen . . .

He interrupted himself with that oddly un-adult mirth of his.

Had they seen her name? Oh, they'd laugh when they did see. Came with the old hooker when he bought her. Right out of the Bible it was—Lupé-a-Noa. They'd never guess in a thousand years. Pigeon of Noah.

Van seized his hand with impulsive warmth. "Why then this must be . . . Why, Mr. Noah, I didn't recognize you now you've shaved. But we're still talking in our family of your splendid hospitality."

Burke guffawed delightedly. "I sure will feel like Noah," he said, "a-taking you all on to the Ark, two by two."

He turned, presently, to the pile of salvaged stores and gear. The Pigeon, as was evident, could stow only the more valuable part. The rest must be left under canvas and sent for.

Details were arranged. Burke would get back aboard at once to take charge on the schooner. The yacht's launch, with three of her own men, would tow Burke's boat out, both loaded with stores. While these were unloading at the Lupé-a-Noa, Thurston

would get his other boats into the water, sort over the supplies.

"We'll stow the very best first," said Burke in conclusion, "and then see what space we got left for second rate cargo."

The launch hove a line to the Pigeon's boat and one of the native boys stood ready to carry his master out. But Captain Kidder hesitated, as if pondering some suggestion.

Now, however, Palmyra, unable to satisfy a youthfully poignant curiosity at long distance through her binoculars, spoke up eagerly. "Oh, Captain Burke, do please take me with you! I'd just love to be first aboard."

"Me, too," cried Constance.

The man was pleased, flattered. "I was just going t'mention t'Mrs. Crawford," he said, "that some lady ought t'scout out and tell the others what sort o' quarters t'get ready for. But—" he hesitated awkwardly—"the boat's heavy loaded and there won't be no room aboard while we're taking cargo. So I better only invite one this trip." He winked at Thurston. "And Miss Tree she asked first, and seeing as how she was the best student I had for my South Sea lectures, seems as if she had ought t'be first t'lay aboard a genuine South Sea trader."

Thurston acquiesced. But as Burke was being carried down to the boats, John turned to Johannsen, acting mate, and said: "You yourself be one of our three men to go aboard and—stay."

The big sailor gave him a look to see if the order had had more than routine significance, then lumbered after Burke.

In the boat the girl's mind was gradually brought back to the something in Captain Kidder's manner which she had not been able to analyze. For now it was so noticeably upon him that he was either constrained, absent or too painstakingly voluble.

"And how is Olive?" she asked in an awkward interval. "He's with you, of course?"

Ponapé Burke assented. "Sort of in charge aboard," he explained. "I ain't got a mate. Still talking about you; yer name and yer—red hair."

The motor in the launch ahead had been working badly. Now it stopped. Beyond the reef the Pigeon of Noah waited, her nose into the wind, her copper flashing in the sun as the black hull rose and fell.

Burke stood up in the boat to wave a signal with his cap to the kanakas aboard. As he raised his arm the starched fabric of the coat was pulled away from his body and the wind caught it out. The girl was startled to discover a heavy revolver hidden in a holster against the man's side under the arm.

He was immediately aware of her discovery. As the launch hauled ahead, stopped, then went on under oars, he explained:

"Fact is, Miss Tree, my life wouldn't be worth a dime if them devils aboard ever got me unarmed. I ain't no husky brute like what I out t'be. Can't take a chance with 'em."

There was that in his manner which did not convince. She wondered if he could have been drinking. Again, the ugly suspicion that he was elated at some idea of turning their misfortune to his financial advantage.

She glanced at him uneasily. As they sat, side by side, the big shining semi-circular scar on his forehead was very close. She looked away toward the schooner and, presently, back again. He had shifted his cap to cover the scar.

At this discovery—so significant may small actions sometimes become—the blood mounted into her cheeks. For here, at last, was enlightenment. The man was concerned with his personal appearance.

Surely, their stations in life were so different . . . But, perhaps . . . Yes, seemingly now, she must, on the Rainbow, have been too friendly.

With disturbing clearness there flashed upon the screen of recollection his tribute to the power of beauty such as hers on the island wanderer. Why had she never before thought of a personal application?

It struck her also for the first time that when he had come running up the beach to their rescue, it was as if he saw only her. And he'd shaken hands with an eagerness that vaguely troubled her then—troubled her more greatly now.

She was not a vain girl. But there seemed no escaping the conclusion. Absurdly, Ponapé Burke had achieved an infatuation for her.

Astern, her people were far away. Ahead, the schooner no longer attracted her. She was angry to discover that her eager demand for this passage out had assumably been no more than a response to the man's calculated purpose of suggestion.

She was all at once vaguely afraid here alone. A glance at big Johannsen and the other two white men in the launch should have reassured. But she



was thinking it would have been much better had the rescue come from some other vessel.

The Pigeon of Noah, looming at last above the boat, seemed surprisingly large, her masts reaching up to trace eccentric figures against the sky. From her flattened sails came a flurry of slapping reef points and about her deck scurried brown figures, uttering sounds shrill, guttural, strange.

The boat rounded the stern and then the girl looked up to find—as if his eyes had never ceased to follow—the grinning stare of the man Olive fixed upon her just as it had faded out at Honolulu.

For an instant a Palmyra, unsuspectedly tense under the recent clang of circumstance, on edge with the immediate shock of revelation concerning Ponapé Burke, saw that mask much as it had first leaped out at her under the flare of her torch.

She sprang up, as if with some child-like purpose to clutch the white man for protection. Then, after a moment, she managed a welcoming smile, though she could not keep herself from suspecting this leer-ing figurehead-of-mirth of a diabolical satisfaction at the wreck. In her new conviction about the master she remembered his man's finger ring and its possible significances. If Burke, who had never shown any sign, had become enamored, what of this creature whose eyes had ever devoured her?

As she stood, comparing herself to a little frog, fascinated, helpless under the eye of a serpent, Olive's great naked body rose above the rail and a thick bare arm came extending itself down toward her, inexorably. As the froglet might, when the fanged mouth was very close, make one feeble effort

at escape, so now she tried to step backward, threw out her hand to regain a balance, and—was caught. The square fingers closed and her own hand was swallowed, disappeared in that grip clear to the wrist. There came a pull, as if the arm were to follow the hand in, and then Palmyra found herself on deck and standing free.

The master of the *Lupé-a-Noa* was still in the boat, looking shoreward. Presently he swept the sails with critical eye, glanced at the girl and then sprang aboard with some native sentence to his man.

Johannsen had already clambered to the deck.

“We got t’keep four boats moving,” Burke explained. “One pulling ashore empty, one loading there, one coming out with cargo, one discharging here. Each o’ yer boats’ crews’ll bring me a load and take back an empty at once. I’ll clear the boat y’leave. So now, you Rainbow boys, t’sart her off, pass up the stuff in my own boat and take her ashore, while my kanakas tackle the launch.”

The girl’s voice rose in surprise: “Oh, but they’re not going already?”

Burke looked, grinning, from her to the naked savages of his crew. “Sort o’ wild like, eh?” he asked.

But Johannsen reassured her: “I’m ordered to stay, miss.”

He really felt Thurston had meant all three to remain so long as she was aboard. But he saw no sense in this, chose to give the order his own interpretation.

Burke shot him a glance. “Sure.” Then to the

other two: "Yohannsen'll tinker up the motor so, next trip, the launch won't have t'be pulled in."

A minute later the boat had cast off and the sailors were settling to their work. Johannsen, watching them, stood negligently at the rail.

"Handle her gentle, boys," called Burke. "She's getting old."

The boat was now clear by perhaps ten fathoms.

Suddenly, Ponapé Burke, with an agility unexpected in that plump body, leaped forward and lunged at the unsuspecting Johannsen's back. The next second the sailor was in the water.

Burke whirled, whipped out an order, sprang to the wheel. The kanakas worked like mad. Another order and the sails filled, the deck listed down and the Pigeon of Noah was under way.

The man at the wheel burst into that tittering laugh of his, now strained, false, sharp-edged with excitement, exultation.

"Remember, girl?" he cried. "Below on the Rainbow—night black? Wanted t'scare 'em a bit, says you? Pirates, bucket o' blood?" His laugh rose into a crow of triumph. "Well, kid, what about this here? Give 'em a hell of a startle, eh Palmie?"

## CHAPTER XV

### "TWO BY TWO"

As the *Lupé-a-Noa* filled away, the girl ran to the rail and sent over the water a frantic cry.

In the boat the two sailors sat, rigid, their oars poised. The red face of Johannsen emerged from the sea, dripping, blank with incredulity, convulsed with anger. Ponapé Burke's strategy had deprived them of the launch in which they could have overhauled the schooner.

Ashore, the castaways stood perplexed, alarmed. Palmyra's action, rather than her voice, threw them into panic. They pointed, shouted, ran here and there, futile, absurd.

To Van Buren Rutger rushed the girl's mother with something in her hands. It was a rifle. As one of his accomplishments, Van had won trophies on the range. But now, confronted by that violence his training had taught him never touched the life of a gentleman, he faltered, palsied in a fear of wounding the girl herself.

Then John Thurston snatched the rifle. There was a flash and a bullet struck the *Lupé-a-Noa*, shattering the glass on the binnacle. A second flash, and Burke himself staggered back. But before the schooner could fall off, he clutched the wheel again with one hand. As his left arm hung, the spot of blood, spreading slowly on the white cotton, was like some brilliant blossom.

Burke bellowed his rage. These oaths would have been shockingly incongruous had not the infantile features become, under the illuminating emotion, weirdly adult. "Damn him!" he cried, "I was half minded t'go about and say it was a joke. But now, by the eternal God, I'll see it through."

He had swung the vessel over so that Palmyra, all unaware, stood in the line of fire. Thurston could not shoot again.

The kanaka crew, at the wounding of their master, had broken for cover. Eyes, staring white in dark faces, peered from every skulking place. Burke's temper transferred itself to his men. He snatched out the revolver. There was a report. One of the brown seamen, with a yelp, dropped the remaining fragment of a jug that had been dangling from his hand. A roar of laughter, not of amusement but of propitiation. They sprang to their stations, alacritously daring the danger of shore rather than a second shot from their own quarter deck.

At this triumph of discipline, Burke regained his good humor. The wound had proved unimportant. "John's the only man in that bunch," he conceded amiably. "If he was stealing *my* girl I'd give him more than a sore arm."

Palmyra was desperate. Behind her, her hand closed on an iron belaying pin. "You—you brute!" she cried. "Turn—this—vessel—back. Turn it back *instantly!*"

Ponapé Burke shouted with laughter. Her courage, her spirit delighted him. "Pirate blood, says you! Bonny lass. Pirate blood in yer veins."

She jerked the pin from its socket; took a step to-

ward him, her eyes aflame. "You go back to that island . . ."

The muscles of her own splendid body toned by a lifetime of outdoor play, she would have been no mean antagonist for a plumpish little man with dangling arm. But he beamed upon her. "What?" he cried. "Brain a guy, would you? I always did say y'had the nerve for a life like this. But that, that Van!" He sought for, failed to find, an epithet sufficiently withering. "You his wife?" he jeered. "Why, the very first row y'had you'd scare him t'death."

A sob broke from the girl's lips. She would have hurled herself upon him. But, from behind, a hand closed on her wrist. Olive, grinning, took the belaying pin from her fingers, as if they had been a baby's, and returned it to the rack.

Palmyra sank against the cabin, helpless.

As Olive, presently, freed his master of the blood-wet coat, she saw that, in addition to the arm holster of which she knew, Burke wore on the other side a second weapon.

He noted her scrutiny with a complacent grin. Holding up one of the revolvers he gazed at it with an expression oddly like veneration.

"That's me," he announced. "My soul; everything I am. Without it . . ." He shrugged expressively. "Old Col. Colt sure did even things up for us little men." There was a real enthusiasm for this benefactor of the undersized. "Before him, the first husky along took what he wanted. But not since. With this I don't dip my colors t'none o' 'em. I just stand pat on my gat. I don't ask



no favors and don't grant none. I keep what I got and get what I can."

While Olive dressed the wound, Burke's mind reverted to the launch and its cargo. Mirth came, uproarious, elemental. Was it not clever the way he'd tricked 'em out of that fine launch, their only hope of reaching another island?

But in the midst of his satisfaction he stopped short to explain why he hadn't tried for more of the Rainbow stores. Professional pride required her to understand. He'd have her know he could have got more—all he wanted. Just let 'em keep coming out. That was easy. But a man had to draw the line somewhere. Had to be decent. Things might have shaped so's he'd have had to get rough with her folks. And she wouldn't have liked 'em left on short rations.

Even at that though, he exulted, it was like a regular Christmas tree: liqueurs for him and fancy tinned goods for her, and cartridges and—yes, would y'have thought it possible?—some fool had even chucked in the strong box full of cash!"

She interrupted stonily. "But you. . . . You who received every kindness aboard her. Why did you wreck the yacht?"

He was surprised, indignant. "*Aue-e-e*," he cried, "yer stacking up unexpected-like on that reef might have spoiled everything."

Not by accident had the Pigeon of Noah risen from the sea upon the scene of their disaster. Back in the days before Honolulu this spider of a Burke had spun his web. He had talked of the atolls in the terms of a paradise until the voyagers were eager to

behold. He had convinced Pedersen that, to take advantage of prevailing winds and currents, he must lay his course from Honolulu first to the northern Gilberts—Butaritari or Apaiang—and thence make north and west into the Marshalls and the Carolines.

Burke had followed, then, holding back the fast sailing *Lupé-a-Noa* to match the yacht's pace. Fortune had favored. The keen-eyed brown sailors, knowing there was something to see, had even picked up the *Rainbow's* topsails on several days, while the white men of the yacht were blind.

But that had been beside the plan. Informed as to the lagoons they would make, their order, he had meant to outsail them to an anchorage and, lying there unsuspected, to seize the girl at some favorable moment ashore. And then, the fleet Pigeon away with none in all those wild seas save the fat old *Rainbow* to pursue, what could have been more easy?

"And just t'think," he tittered, "if y'hadn't been so hospitable and lit that bonfire—'twas night before last—I'd of sailed right by and never guessed."

She was startled into an exclamation.

"Oh, yes," he crowed. "Aboard the wreck, and watching you, too, from behind a bunch o' coral, close up."

He roared at her discomfiture.

"Boatload o' chandlery for my trouble, and standing off and on since, while y'get good and homesick."

A sob of self-pity shook the girl, though even now she did not, in her innocence, comprehend the depth of his infamy.

The man himself, leaning over the wheel, sought,

with an honest concern, to soothe her. Even she realized that he was moved by a real earnestness of emotion, conviction.

"If a little wild bird had been brung up in a shiny brass cage," he argued, "wouldn't that bird be scairt the first day she fetched free? But only because she didn't savvy. A week, and you'd have t'shoot her t'get her back.

"Well, kid, that's you. They was after setting y'up on a perch alongside Van t'say 'Tweet, tweet!' all yer days." He shouted with contemptuous laughter. "You who was born strong and wild. You that was meant t'fight and love and live."

He gripped his hands upon the wheel in an excess of disdain.

"Cry yer eyes out for yer mother. That can't be helped. But the rest o' them dickey birds?" He snorted in derision. "Why, they . . . Y'think now you'll miss 'em. But wait. Tomorrow, next day. You'll be laughing, too; laughing at all of 'em—at Van. And then. . . ." He spoke with the impressiveness of certitude. "Then you'll be thanking me."

She fought back the tears. "If it's money," she cried. "If you want money—they will pay. Oh, yes—" eagerly—"they will give you more, more than ever you dreamed."

He stared at her, dumb in a hurt surprise.

"Money?" he exclaimed at last. "Money! Why I wouldn't put back if that island was knee deep in gold."

His undeveloped features were eloquent in protest at this wrong she had done him. It occurred to

her, even then, that an elemental nature such as his, incapable of the more complex sentiments, might respond to its few broad fundamental emotions with an intensity seldom found in more highly organized perceptions.

"*We ain't going back t'them,*" he explained painstakingly, "and they can't come t'us. Jap man-o'-war never touches there. Natives figure it's too far. Yer fine friends—dam' 'em—will be stuck for months. Weeks or months more, even if they do hit an inhabited atoll, before they can get a passage on."

His good humor was restored by this picture.

"Why, kid," he grinned, "didn't y'get any o'that back there about Noah and the Ark? Who went into the Ark, says you? And what happened t'them as didn't?"

He leered at her humorously.

Her hands clinched until the sharp nails brought the blood.

"Don't blame *me!*" he cried in a sudden flare of emotion. "Don't blame *me*. Blame yourself. I fought agin it—right along. Didn't I warn you? Warn y'how you'd set a poor starved devil like me a-fire? But you? Y'just had t'keep hanging around: you who was like, like God's daughter. Hanging around and hanging around 'till y'had me fair wild."

The flame of that fire leaped into his eyes.

"I swore then I'd have you. Lucky for yer folks I saw how t'trap y'on here. For, if need was, I'd of killed every soul of 'em in cold blood."

She shrank in loathing.

Burke was silent, conquering that evil flame of passion.

Then, shortly: "Original Noah," the man jeered; "he went it blind. But me—I *know* our mountain top, every inch o'it. And, girl," he warned, "when the Ark does hit dry land, make no mistake. You'll never see arey one o'yer folks agin. For you, they've perished off the face o'the earth. The flood's made a clean sweep. In all creation there's only you—and me."

Exaltation was in his gaze; obscure, intimidating.

"Noah was given the whole world for his own," he cried. "But no more than we. On that mountain top I'll set y'over 'em all. Every unclean beast and creeping thing of a kanaka put into yer hands. And—Lord!—how I'll show y't'make 'em crawl!

"Come, girl, y'shall be a queen."

## CHAPTER XVI

### VAN DESPAIRS AND JOHN PREPARES

BACK ashore, where the moment of Palmyra Tree's abduction had found her fiancé so afraid of wounding the girl that he could not raise a rifle in her defence, every passing circumstance was carrying forward the revelation of two characters.

Van, as he saw his betrothed thus torn from him, stood, staring after the schooner, his face convulsed. He seemed frozen into that attitude of horror. At last, however, he turned; went stumbling away over the broken coral. When he reached the cocoa palms he flung himself down on a chest. As he sat his figure began to settle in upon itself as if he were again thawing, softening under the vertical plunge of sun. He had been thrust back into a despair tenfold that whence the Pigeon of Noah had first raised him.

Nor was there lacking, in his acquiescence, an element of greatness. The girl was gone; absolutely nothing could be done to save her. And Van—without any of those intervening rages of refusal to accept what must be accepted, those splendidly futile rebellions against Fate—was able to pass at once into that final submission which is the lot of strong and weak alike.

Not so, however, John Thurston. As well as Van he knew nothing could be done. But he would not



accede. Burke's crime had thrown him into a frenzy.

At the moment, nothing remained save the instinct for action. Unable to use the rifle again, he went bounding out across the reef until he was waist-deep in water. When the physical sensation warned him that he could not run after the schooner, drag the dear girl from its deck with his own hands, he turned, came struggling back, bellowed at the sailors to get the boats into the lagoon.

Two of the boats were already loading.

Thurston's mind reacted a step from chaos. "Unload those boats," he yelled. "Unload 'em, I say!"

Becoming aware that he still clutched the rifle, he fired two shots to recall the launch party, which had now picked up Johannsen.

The castaways had been huddling, sheep-like. Thurston, possessed of his ferocious desire to do something, appeared to have forgotten the other men. He ran to one of the half-loaded boats. He threw the stores out. He seized the boat, dragged it, carried it up on the sand. Then he seemed, for the first time, to realize how utterly inadequate it was to the demand he would have made upon it.

He turned from the thing in a furious disgust. But one glance at the other boats showed them equally unavailable.

There was a pile of spars, sails, salvaged material from the wreck. Everything was being rushed ashore which could be of use for shelters or other construction.

He turned on this wreckage, began to throw it right and left. So far he responded to his savage

urge for action, rather than any calculated purpose. But with muscular use came relief. The disorder of his mind was subsiding before the habit of performance under emergency.

A sailor detached himself from the sheep-like group and came towards him. A second followed. "What next, Mr. Thurston?"

"Here." Thurston indicated the wreckage. "Begin to sort that out. I'll be back in a minute."

He ran across to Captain Pedersen. "Captain," he demanded, "what can we do? *At once?*"

The deposed sailing master looked back at him haggardly. "Nothing."

"But, but we *must*. I tell you we must. Man, we've got to get to sea. Today—*now!*"

Pedersen groaned. "I wish to God we could, Mr. T'urston. I'm as broke up as you. But there yust ain't no use. Looks now, if we're ever to get off, we'll have to knock together some sort of craft from the wreck."

Thurston cried out in protest. "Weeks, months. No! You, with all your sea experience, you *must* know some way. I, I demand . . ."

But Pedersen shook his head. Nothing whatever could be done.

Suddenly Thurston's face lighted. He stood in thought, his features taking on a more definite tinge of elation. "I've got it!" he cried, and whirled away.

The sailing canoes in which the Polynesian navigators of a bygone day covered the Pacific were catamarans. The explorers built two hulls, so narrow that neither, by itself, would float. But when

the two were fixed, perhaps ten feet apart, by timbers lashed athwart their gunwales amidships, the double canoe became staunch enough—though boasting in all its parts no nail or bolt or rivet, its joints held by nothing stronger than breadfruit gum and twists of cord, its sails no more substantial than plaited leaf—to traffic all away and across the broad Pacific.

It was Thurston's idea now that, placing his four separately worthless boats in tandem, two on each side, he could lash them under a framework of the lighter spars into a machine which would carry a considerable spread of sail.

"If those old catamarans could hold together for a thousand miles," he explained, "ours ought to make the next island."

Work had been going on perhaps an hour when he appeared for the first time to become aware of Van Buren Rutger's drooping figure. John had completely forgotten the other man. Convicted, he ran over to him.

But Thurston attempted no explanation. He saw that the best, the only way out, was to sketch the plan of action, seem to consult the other's judgment. He spoke briefly. "What do you think, Van?" he concluded. "Isn't that as well as we can hope to do?"

Van was silent for a long time; then, unexpectedly, laughed. "As, as good as any," he said. "Go on your raft, and drown. Stay, and starve. What's the difference? As regards her—" he caught his breath in a broken exhalation—"she's *gone*."

Thurston gazed at him somberly. "You, you mean you won't raise a hand for her?"

"I won't," Van answered wearily, "and neither will you. We can't."

Thurston's face was resolute. "Perhaps you're right," he acknowledged. "Very likely so. But for me, I prefer to die—trying."

He would have hurried away but the other detained him.

"I'm not your kind of an ass," Van said. "You fool, you know there's no hope. Yet, by this silly work, you can kid yourself into a sort of relief. Me! . . ." It was as if he looked upon the girl lying dead. But he tore himself from this vision, became defiant. "You, you still think I'm yellow. Very well, then. I'll show you. I'll help now; and when you sail, I, too, shall go."

As they worked furiously, Pedersen watched them. The man was both contrite, jealous. Presently he ventured a protest. "You'll drown yourself."

Thurston laughed scornfully.

Pedersen strode away, but returned. "The girl is gone, lost beyond saving."

Thurston lashed into a timber with an axe. "Hurry," he said to his men. "Hurry."

Once more the deposed sailing master came back. "It's seven women here against one gone. They need your brain, the strength of those men. And this material! We yust got to have it for the schooner that's to save *all*. Seven women, I say, against one—and her sure beyond help."

Thurston swore. He shouldered a boom into

place. "D'you think," he cried, brutally frank, "that I'd balance the certain life of all of you against one chance of saving her?"

Pedersen turned to Mrs. Crawford, the other guests. There was a degree of good sense in his argument.

But Thurston was adamant.

"I tell you this has yust got to stop," roared the deposed sailing master. "I'm by rights captain here. I order you men to stop."

Thurston ordered them on—and they worked.

"Not a man shall sail with you," bellowed Pedersen.

Johannsen stepped forward. "I'll go wit' you, sir. And I know how to keep a dead reckoning."

Others volunteered. Thurston had only to choose.

Sunset came; the night. But he urged them on. One of the Rainbow's spars rose above the timbered platform, a respectable mast. As a final touch canvas was bent over each of the boats to keep it from filling under a breaking sea. As the first color of the dawn touched the eastern sky the last of the stores and gear was lashed into place.

Thurston stooped over Van, who had fallen in the sleep of exhaustion, and waked him. "Say the word," he announced. "We're ready."

Van roused but slowly; then turned upon the stronger man in a futile rage at circumstance. "Damn you," he cried, "I'd rather stay here and die like a gentleman—clean and dry. I hate a nasty wet corpse. Top of its head bobbing up and under like the float on a fishline. And its hair!" He shuddered. But a moment later he sprang up with

his old laugh. "After all, it's got to be the fish or the birds. I'm a braver man than you, you optimistic ass, because I know. . . ." He did not finish his thought. "Come on. Let's get it over."

Twenty minutes later they were at sea.

Twenty hours later the catamaran was drifting, dismasted.

And Van Buren Rutger's the fault. A sufficiently competent fair-weather sailor, he had been given the steering oar. But, sunk in dejection, he had, in a moment of inattention, allowed the too-heavy boom to gybe, carry away the improvised tackle, and snatch the mast overboard. As a result Burke's rotten boat had fetched free of its lashings and the raft floated a wreck.

Doomed never to rescue Palmyra from the villain Burke, John Thurston had yet gladly staked life itself upon a thousandth chance.



## CHAPTER XVII

### EMPRESS "PALM THE PAGAN"

THE Pigeon of Noah was flying into the unknown. From above, the sun, in a great sky of blue and immaculate cloud, set the whitecaps a-sparkle. Now and then the hurrying schooner shouldered into a sea, and a jewelled shower would rise, scintillant, diamond hard in air, yet striking the deck with no more than the splash of water.

The face of the man Burke was a thing to wonder at. Under the exaltation of a master idea it had grown strange, compelling. His eyes gleamed, his tongue stumbled in its eagerness. For the first time in life he was to voice that which long had hidden in his evil mind. What had been only a vision of power was now to become an actuality. And so much, so very much, depended on kindling that wild spark he felt to glow within the soul of this girl he had seized for his own—*his woman*.

"Tanna!" he cried. "Tanna! Ever hear tell o' that island, Palm?" He laughed excitedly. "Indeed, and I've took good care t'make y'acquaint."

He exulted in her response to the name. He'd done his work well. Already Tanna meant much to her.

"'Tis for Tanna we'll be laying a course, you and me," he went on, with exuberant gesture acquired from the natives. "Tanna, where we'll lord it like born king and queen."

So that was why, on the Rainbow, he'd talked so much of this black New Hebridean isle? The girl, crouching against the bulwark, stared up at him, abhorring yet fascinated. She'd always known his mind was busy with the place. It had been his home after leaving Samoa; he spoke one of its dialects.

And the inhabitants of this fine round rugged island! Almost the shade of ancestral walnut, short of stature, they were still rather a sturdy good-looking lot as Papuans went. But, in the more benighted parts of the island at least, they remained utterly savage. Except for rifles and gin, they were as the first visitor had found them: stark naked; their faces smeared with red clay; their hair carried back from brow to shoulder in a wig-like mop of five or six hundred strands, each wound about, till it resembled a cord, with the skin of a vine—died red; their business still all too often that warfare of the oven which is so horrid to civilized man.

As if the girl's recollection of these facts had formed itself audibly, Burke now exclaimed in consonance:

"What a people! What a people t'work with!" His fingers opened and closed anticipatorily, with a cat-like zestfulness. "What can't we do t'them Papuan wildmen," he cried, "and what can't we make 'em do for us. That's the ticket, Palm: *what we can make 'em do for us!*"

Less than forty years ago, Palmyra knew, the missionaries had yet to gain a foothold on Tanna. Twenty years ago they could still count their converts by no more than the half dozen. Today, with the New Testament translated into the Aniwa dialect

and coral churches gleaming white among the green villages, perhaps two-thirds of the island is at times reported as under Christian influence; certainly a half really is so, in the South Sea way.

But Ponapé Burke's comment had been characteristic:

"If," he jeered, "us whites has had t'sail two thousand year under church colors t'get t'be even the bum saints what we are, and if in the Godliest islands o' the Pacific y'couldn't hire a native pastor t'spend a night alone in the high bush for a pass straight into Heaven,—islands, too, where they're so dam' pious they haven't cooked a meal on Sunday since granddad was a pup,—what can y'expect o' these here rampaging cannibals, with their hair all wound round with a woolen string? Considerable traces o' red paint and voodoo, eh? as t'even the holiest parts, let alone the black-as-night heathen."

Ponapé Burke, having thus on the Rainbow so made the girl "acquaint" with Tanna, could now turn at once to the island's strange priesthood—the Pain Burners.

As he talked he would pause, perhaps to mop the perspiration from his brow, or automatically to swear at a brown seaman gaping near. He would hurry on, almost shouting in this enthusiasm; then hesitate in fear he was not presenting the, to him, alluring picture in a way to stir the wild blood in her veins.

Anciently, it seemed, some Papuan Moses, paralleling in method the laws of Judah, had made the sanitary code a part of religion. Surmising that refuse about the houses brought disease, he had

given unto the Tannamen this commandment: Thou shalt not rest until all filth is safe in the sea. And that they should *not* rest, he created this hereditary fraternity of Pain Burners.

All day long, feared, hated, these men stole about the villages seeking broken food and refuse—*nahak*. And if one of them found, say, a bit of breadfruit he tied it to a stick and carried it about for all to see. And from the houses the people, their eyeballs shining in the black shadow under the thatch, would watch and wonder who among them was next to be stricken down.

At dusk the Pain Burner made the breadfruit, with bark fragments, into a leaf roll, and put it by the fire so that the end began to scorch. Then he would sit back comfortably, as one whose day's work is well done, and smile as if listening for a pleasant sound.

Soon, perhaps, it would come. Afar in the moonlighted silence would rise the supplicating voice of a conch shell. Then the Pain Burner would chuckle and take the *nahak* from the fire and say: "Let us see what the sunrise brings." And that which it brought was fowls and mats and white man's steel, or even a canoe.

For it was believed that all sickness was caused by these burnings. Man's life was forfeit to village cleanliness. As the *nahak* of his shiftlessness smouldered, so did the flame of existence grow lurid and gutter and snuff out. While the *nahak* lasted, the man lay in misery; when the final fragment charred, then—death.

It was the first concern, therefore, of anyone falling

ill, to let the Pain Burner know that he felt the pang; that, if the Pain Burner would desist, the reward of moderation should be his by earliest morning light. Hence the conch. So long as the victim suffered, the trumpet shell kept sending its wail out into the night; the worse the pain, the more dismal its note.

If the paroxysm passed, the sick man said the Pain Burner had been reasonable; if it returned the second night, that he had been dissatisfied with his honorarium. And if the man died it was thought the Pain Burner had, indeed, been hard to please; had burned the *nahak* to the last dread morsel.

And so the nights were filled with propitiatory trumpetings and the houses of the Pain Burners were filled with goods.

Ponapé Burke stopped. He sought her face for some perception of the significance of his story. Very possibly he had expected that, by now, her eyes would have kindled. If so, he was disappointed, for she had not the slightest sense of the meaning that so richly savored the account for him.

"Why, Palm, kid," he cried, "the Lord simply created them Pain Burners for our personal benefit. Don't y'savvy? The missionaries have put the graft just enough on the bum t'make conditions perfect. *Aue-e-e!* We can step right in and take over the whole business."

He paused to give her a chance; was a little crest-fallen that she remained silent.

"When brown meets white," he proceeded in explanation, "brown always goes down. But what white has knocked flat, white can restore; specially if it's the likes o'you and me agin some dinky li'l



old missionary with holy whiskers. The Pain Burners who've lost out want t'get back aboard; those still in wants t'stay. They'll all jump at the chance o' white aid, organization, brains. Help us t'anything we ask; make us the Devil's own bishops o' Tanna."

He burst into that tittering laugh of his, always in some obscure way so sinister.

"*Panga!*" he cried exultantly. "We put Pain Burning back into commission, with a joss abaft one o' their former sacred places: a joint every bit as swell as any mission compound. We send our Pain Burners out a-cruising after *nahak*. What happens, says you? Why, maybe nothing at first beyond a little surreptitious gooseflesh up and down the local spine.

"But wait. We get some *nahak* on to one o' the chiefs. We begins t'burn. He knows, everybody knows. And then . . ." Ponapé Burke leant forward in an evil playfulness. "And then perhaps that chief gets took sick." He leered at her intimately. "Savvy?" He lowered his voice. "I got some dope in the medicine chest that'd make a horse sick if it mingled into his chow, accidental like." He guffawed jubilantly, straightened back, winked. "Yes, *sir!* And if we can *nahak* one o' the white missionaries—why, Palm, the island's ours!"

"Don't y'see, girl?" he went on, presently. "Don't y'get it? 'Twon't be six months 'till we'll have 'em tooting all night long, and coming t'us all day with the plunder—basket upon basket.



'Cause our Pain Burners'll work strictly for business and business'll mean good, clean, trade copra.

"And we needn't be afraid t'lay the graft on heavy. Cannibal human nature being little better than Christian, 'taint likely the old Pain Burners threw *nahak* away so long as a lump o' fat was left in a customer t' fry out.

"Why, girl . . ." His voice vibrated with emotion. "Why, girl, we'll own the island: a line o' schooners carrying our copra t' Sydney; the kanakas a-sweating their heart's blood out for us."

Ponapé Burke stopped, perched himself on the rail, bellowed at a seaman to fetch water for his thirst. He had done his best. Complacency tinged his elemental visage. The girl's life, perforce, had been tame, circumscribed. But, absolutely, there was that in her nature which must kindle, flare up at this vision of unparalleled adventure, of unchallenged liberty, of unlimited power.

But the truth was, as he sat awaiting the first warming touch of that response, the girl was fighting an actual physical nausea. On the Rainbow she had delighted in his narrations, thinking he but manufactured the sort of world in which a bad little boy might yearn to swagger. She would there, as had been her habit with him, have greeted this scheme in a simulated enthusiasm. That, however, was when she thought it all harmless invention. How different now, in the horror of her new understanding.

Her aversion left no room for wonder that this creature, supposedly brute matter-of-fact, had turned out a visionary. Yet vile as his creation, it still

had its origin in some perverted shred of that power to believe the seemingly unbelievable which has achieved the world's great things.

Nor did it occur to her he could be in any sense pathetic. But there *was* pathos in the fact that this man, alien to her in every respect, should utterly believe in the breathing existence of a thing which never could have lived; a strain within her, that, once freed of the habits of an irking repression, would make them truly kindred.

The girl's most nearly coherent response, in truth, was for the moment a sort of profound humiliation that any being in human form could so exult in a greed to be thus satiated in dread and misery.

But before her abhorrence could find expression, Ponapé Burke resumed. Even his infatuation had realized the need of a final tempting morsel.

"Wait, Palm," he cried eagerly. "Avast 'till y'hear the best." He dropped down on the deck before her, close.

"So far, it's been the sick; how much we could make a *tamaloa* pay for the bellyache. But what . . ." His hand reached out familiarly and a finger tapped her knee. "But what about when he croaks? Y'thought if he slipped his cable, went out with the tide, he fetched clear of our hooks?" Burke's eyes were very near, brimming with an ugly delight. "Why, Lord, girl, there's where we hit him hardest. 'Tain't his body then. It's his everlasting soul!"

The withered blankness of Burke's own soul revealed itself in the long-suppressed cackle of mirth.

For heathen belief indeed offered one more thumb-

screw ready to the use of the exploiter. The Tannaman, however ferocious to the stranger, loves his own; cares as tenderly as he knows for the sick and the aged; makes of his children's whims almost a command. And herein, the diabolical Burke saw a chance to wring tribute both from the dying and from those who mourn.

There have been terrible things in our own interpretations of Christianity, but nowhere such a moment of torture as pagan Tanna held—and still holds—at the hour of death for the loved ones left behind.

In the old Tannan belief, when the last fluttering breath dies upon the blue lips, the soul is liberated and straightway wings out across the sea toward the westerly skyline. And there, where sea and cloud meet, it pauses to await its fate. If Fortune choose, that soul shall float on into Umatmas, a Tannan heaven; a land of sunshine and eternal joy. Or, if Fortune fail, the soul shall be crushed out, between two boulders, instantly and forever.

And here is the awful thing: whether that soul shall be obliterated, or shall pass on into the sunshine of everlasting life, rests with the near and dear. And neither prayer nor votive offering nor loving sacrifice shall aid. It is the world's most biting gamble. They must stake the hereafter upon their luck in a throw of dice!

Does a dear baby lie there before the mother, dead?

Its little brown body upon the mat is not yet cold. But the cry of the mourners fills the air. The breath of life is gone, the spirit flown. Then comes one, the

father, and presses into the mother's fingers the pebbles with which she must throw for the baby's soul.

At the portals of Umatmas, out under the western sky, the baby waits. The mother, as her palm feels the cold stones, sees the baby's hands outstretched in supplication, hears the little voice in its appeal. And then, half-swooning, frantic, she casts the pebbles from her. Upon the mats they scatter, roll; come at last to a dread pause. Eternal life; eternal nothingness!

Small wonder, then, that Burke should exult at refixing upon Tanna in all its former bitter hold this horror of the pagan night. For in such an hour of hideous alternative what would a mother not pay to make her baby safe?

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HEATHEN HAIR

AT first Ponapé Burke could not get over the idea that he had presented his vision inadequately. He was sure Palmyra's apathy had its being in some doubt that the plan was practical.

For perhaps an hour he had been at the wheel, driving the schooner under full canvas, studying the girl's face covertly. Then his own features lighted with inspiration. He yelled for a brown seaman to take the helm, hurried across to her.

"Savvy now too much," he grinned.

There was in his eyes a shrewdness, seemingly precocious because so unquestionably adult. "Y' think the traders'll fight us, them having t'pay for their copra, while we gets ours free?" He dismissed the possibility with a grimace, a shrug. "Part o' the group's too blame wild for many trading stations. Mostly boat work. And besides: Tanna's knee-deep in cocoanuts, but nobody's been able t'make the dam' kanakas cut 'em into copra. Us, though . . ." He tittered enjoyingly. "We'll have 'em busy as bees making honey—*our* honey!"

Again, it occurred to him she felt the government would interfere.

"Why, Palm, girl," he cried, "I reckon a feller can come nearer doing what he pleases in the New Hebrides than about anywhere on earth."

The group was perhaps the most backward in the Pacific. This was due, not so much to its savage people, as to that curse in governments, a joint control. Great Britain would not step out of a chain so near Australia, nor France one covering her New Caledonia, with its nickel mines. Hence the condominium, under which, as is always the case, there was suspicion, jealousy; divided authority, responsibility. Natives and white adventurers played one power against the other; did, as to parts of the group at least, almost as they chose. Blackbirding, gin, gun running. Each power, desiring popular adherence, accused the other of remitting fines, winking at flagrant transgressions by its partisans.

"We'll go it French," explained Ponapé Burke. "Austryia being so close, France has the harder time keeping up a gang. She ought t'pay high for a couple o' live Frogs like what we'll be, with the kanaka vote safe in our pocket."

It was not until they were eating—a stew of pickled beef and broken ship's biscuit—that the thought struck him she might fear the missions were growing too strong to oppose. In his eagerness to reassure her, he gulped down a mouthful, choked.

At midday your Tannaman, hale and hearty, with Misi to hold him by the hand—yes, he was a great little Christian—then. But at midnight, with the tummyache, and Misi tucked into his mission bed far away—that was different. Then, the stars bored down like gimlets, for they were the eyes of dead Tannamen, who had believed in Pain Burning and soul dice, and wanted to know why he hadn't helped Gran'ma into Umatmas. And from the



nearest trees of the bush, *aremba*—meaning dead men, the Tannese devils—licked their chops at a decadent smart-alec who'd found the old-time religion, that was good enough for father, wasn't good enough for him.

"Why, girl," said Burke, "in even the psalm-singingest parts o' Tanna 'tis only the juveniles that feel real honest-t'-goodness safe from Pain Burning; the grandads, ashamed maybe o' being old fashioned, but conscientious, picking up every scrap o' *nahak* the youngsters strews about, and whispering 'em for God's sake t'be careful. Such being so, what can't we do in an island that believed so thorough even the Pain Burners themselves used t'get out with a toot-horn when a pain came on?"

Presently again it was with the extorsive delectability of "soul crap shooting" that he sought to rouse her.

If, now, suppose, Ponapé Burke's old folks had believed, and Ponapé himself, lying there ready to croak, was looking out across the water at the shadow of those big stones a-waiting for him—say, wouldn't he just plain backslide? And if a swell new white joss was preaching soul dice, with a brand of bones on the market guaranteed, *guaranteed* to see him through safe and certain—what wouldn't he order the family to pay? And that went double if it was give out the joss was shy of stock and must hustle to find one set more.

Or, if Palmyra's own baby had gone. Say, what then? Would she take a chance with its immortal soul? Nix. She'd get Misi on the job all right, exhorting public-like in front, and then slip her cable

quiet and set every kite for good old Dr. Burke's to mortgage the homestead.

Ponapé Burke laughed long, uproariously.

"Oh, boy!" he cried. "The easiest, richest graft the world ever saw."

The Tannamen played the game with a speckled pebble from stream or beach. If the throw came up even spots, then the soul, said Burke, went cavorting on into Umatmas. But if it was an odd number, then under the steam hammer—pop, like a bug.

He tittered again at this.

"Believe me," he jubilated, "we'll load a line o' pebbles that'll sure roll right. Or," he added with a happy thought, "import an invoice o'real store ivories—leaded t'shoot according to ad—for classy chiefs' funerals.

"And *safe!*" His face was lighted by an exaltation almost holy. "Dead *tamaloas* tell no tales. Who's coming back from o'er the water t'say our craps are a fake?"

He sprang up excitedly. "By God, girl," he cried, "there it lays waiting ready for them with guts enough t'use it."

But still she did not respond. He went away, fretted, sulked, stared over the rail in dejection. Not until several hours later did his countenance suddenly reflect a relief so intense as to border the ludicrous. At last he had it. Women always wanted to captain the ship. And he'd entirely failed to make her understand her superlative importance to the plan.

"Why, kid," he was expostulating a moment later, "this here big idea ain't something that popped into

m'head just recent. Gosh, no. Had it in mind years. But . . .” He hesitated, diffident; a thing so foreign to his usual brazen assurance as to seem histrionic. “But the fact is I was a-waiting for, for *you!*”

She was once more aware how very real his infatuation.

“I just had t’have a dame for this stunt,” he went on passionately. “A real dame, a sure enough queen. But where would the likes o’ me find one—out here? Years go by. And then I meets you. The very first watch I sees y’got the shape for it. And when y’lets out about pirate blood, I knows y’got the heart for it. ’Cause yer talk’s on the square; more on the square than you yerself realizes.”

The girl was increasingly understanding how irrevocably, on the Rainbow, he had been misled by her caprice. Listening at first in a pleased surprise, he had been eagerly self-deceived. Sure that the lawless strain, persisting through environment, had at last roused, he was now convinced she was already in love with the life he typified—though she herself did not as yet perceive the fact—and that, in the glamour this life cast upon himself, she would in time willingly come to be his own.

In order that she might appreciate her royal significance in his plan, Ponapé Burke begged her to visualize these missionaries who had driven the black-as-night gods from half of Tanna, here quite actually, there at least superficially. She was to note they had come, clean starched like out of a locker, to preach in a church as neat as themselves; had lived in a house all whitewashed and scrubbed,

with pictures on the wall and lace curtains at the window. And then she was to look at the other white men of that day, those who would have been glad to let the old order rule: lousy beachcombers, dirty and drunken, living any whichaway. Small wonder the kanakas, forced to choose, had been acknowledging the superiority of the new.

And what had brought it about? Misi himself, the Bible? Ponapé Burke shrugged in contempt. No. It was the fine starched lady of the mission; she who stood back of it all.

Palmyra found herself voicing a hysterical laugh. She had always thought it odd the absurd little stowaway should be so fussily immaculate. The Lupé-a-Noa she had discovered to be as neat as a man-o'-war. And here on its deck she was divining the disgust with which such a man—cleanliness his one virtue—might loathe the filthy, wholly-masculine establishments of the white adventurers; conceding he might with some force of logic conclude that the Christian faith of Tanna was builded upon the solid rock of good housekeeping; that the essential apostle had been the spick and span wife who handed Misi out his clean collars, who tore from his reluctant grasp his soiled and crumpled linen coats, who drove the house-boys upon him to new pipe-clay his shoes; she indeed without whom he would soon have deteriorated into a lone figure of pathos, frowsy and unimpressive.

“And, girl,” Ponapé Burke was shouting, “there never, never was no Misi had such a woman as you. Yer hair!” He exulted in the wonder of it. “That’s how y’beat ’em all. For, didn’t I tell y’

the Tannamen saw red?—grabbed at red calico, smeared their faces bright and gay, rouged up the dead warrior gaudy t'meet his maker, wound their own heads all over with red vine t'cover the wool?

"Don't y'understand? That's what I was waiting on. The queen o' my devil's own mission *had* t'have red hair. And, Palm, them Tannamen'll go plumb crazy with pious pagan joy when they sees yer locks a-lighting up, as the sun hits 'em, like a stove full o' coals busting into flame. Hair, I tell you, same as that o' some o' the big buck gods o' Melanesia themselves. Yes, I say it, girl—*heathen hair!*

"Why, Palm, I wish t'the Lord y'could see yerself. I wish y'could understand yerself. Y'was plain born for the life. When I've waked y'up, you'll be eager for Tanna: for Tanna, where a man can be a man; where there's never a law but the law o' the cookpot and the sun and the wind—and the will o' you and me."

Ponapé Burke did a jig step or two across the deck.

"Say, Palm, girl," he exclaimed; "say—you and yer heathen hair! Did I, or did I not, mention as how I was going t'make y'a real sure-enough queen?"

## CHAPTER XIX

### WHITE SAVAGE OR BROWN

It was Burke's continuing delight in her every show of angry spirit, his self-restraining sense of competence to bring the comedy to an end any moment he chose, that most intimidated Palmyra.

If at first he had been chagrined, common sense quickly intervened. Even he, in his enthusiasm, could scarcely expect a girl, torn from parents, lover, the whole world she had known; even he could scarcely expect her, within the twenty-fourth hour, to dance and sing.

Hence it was that, soon, at each new outburst, he was tittering jubilantly. "There's a spirit for you," he would cry. "There's a temper. Born, I'll say, for the life. A lass fit for any man."

It was useless to explain her misconception on the Rainbow, her revulsion now.

"Wait 'till I've tamed you," he would laugh. "Then we'll get along fine. And you'll sure like Tanna when y'get the taste o' power in yer pretty mouth."

Only once had he laid a hand upon her. That was when, in a fury, she had flown at him, clawing his face. He had held her away, loudly hilarious. "I'd steal a kiss," he cried, "if 'twasn't for my sore arm. But, no . . . I can wait 'till y'come free, poking out yer lips and begging me t'take a smack. 'Twon't be long."



It was the absolute belief of this primitive man in her early capitulation that daunted the girl. Almost, the fierce upflare of passion might have seemed less terrible.

Nor was her situation made easier by Burke's evil sense of humor. Possibly to hasten her surrender, more probably in a mere cruel amusement, it played upon her fears.

There was, for instance, the occasion when Olive, for the first time aboard the Pigeon of Noah, spoke to her.

Had it not been for those brown-shot eyes, always so stealthily upon her, she would sometimes have thought of this savage as a machine. There was a sort of unhuman precision about him. He would be here, silent, motionless, and then he would be there, something accomplished. He had not hurried, yet the thing was done.

And now, in this wise, the moment Burke had gone below, the brown man materialized himself at her side. She was never prepared for the exceeding change from his statuesque silences into the gesticular animation of his speech. He had opened his mouth, apparently forgetting as on the Rainbow that they knew no word in common. Then, realizing, he stopped at a loss.

The girl shrank back; fled, in panic at the very nearness of him, toward the companionway. But there she recollected that Burke was at the foot of the ladder, and stood helpless.

Then the white man came climbing up. "Y' little vixen," he warned in a malicious enjoyment of the situation, "push me overboard . . ." He inter-

rupted himself with a burst of laughter. "Gad," he cried, "but I'd hate t'give y'the chance! Push me overboard, and I'm gone. But—*Olive's left*. Remember that. I'm what stands between you. I ain't a-saying as how he'd love a red-headed goddess all his own. Oh, no! But I do see he's got his eye on y'like a wolf following a nice fat little lamb off into the timber."

The girl shuddered. Burke or Olive? White savage or brown? A cry of despair rose to her lips but she fought it back. Her hand stole up toward the opening of her dress, lingered, fell again to her side.

Since that event—it was now her third day aboard the *Lupé-a-Noa*—she had been wondering whether Ponapé Burke really did stand between her and his man. She had not forgotten Burke's saying that Olive, if he knew his power, could snap his master's back across one of those big brown knees like a piece of kindling. And she suspected at times that Olive might know this quite well.

There were, of course, the revolvers; always ready to the white man's hand—and deadly. Olive must be brave indeed to risk those. But she felt sure he had already risked them her first night aboard.

The day, with the disconcerting suddenness of the Equator, had faded and darkness would soon have been upon them. Burke had waved a hand toward the cabin with kingly gesture. "The royal chamber awaits, Queenie," he had said. "Hot as hell down there and you'll soon be squawking for a hammock on deck. But tonight . . . There's a lock."

The girl had sprung, trembling, panting, for the

companion, had slammed it shut and shot home the bolts. Then she had stumbled down the steps and thrown herself, sobbing, upon the bunk. She had borne up bravely so long as the sun remained, but on the closing in of night, with all its sinister implications, she had given way.

A swinging lamp smokily illumined the enclosure. With the planking overhead still sizzling from the day's sun, the stifling air was heavy with the rancid sweet of copra. Obliquely along the wall a roach hurried, with erratic stops and turnings. Others of these two-inch infesters of copra craft lurked in corners, made forays into the open, their backs highlighting like browned metal. Under happier circumstances the girl might have laughed, recollecting Burke's stories: of a sailor awaking to find a roach perched on each of his great toes, gnawing away at the toenails; of another man, roused by a thump and bump to find one dragging his shoe across the deck.

But that first night, as they watched her from dark angles, extending their antennae in some sort of insectile curiosity over this new creature who had taken Burke's place, they made her cringe with the feeling that even here she was not safe from furtive observation.

As the schooner rose and fell, a blot of shadow cast by the bottom of the lamp moved along the cabin floor and then across at the end; back and forth, back and forth. In that prisoned place it made her think of a caged animal wearing out its life—back and forth, back and forth.

Sleep impossible, the night dragged on. Above decks there had been, as it seemed for hours, only

the heavy breathing of slumber. At last, like a trapped animal herself, she had begun a futile prying. And then, without warning in that silence, there came, quite close at hand, a sound. The girl crouched, tense. Again it came, hidden, menacing.

Her frightened gaze leaped toward the companion-way; then, at an afterthought, questioned the cabin skylight. Until now she had noted no more of this than that it was hooked shut. Now, however, she sensed subconsciously that the lights should have been raised to let in air. Burke had closed them, either to make her feel safe, or, in his wicked humor, to drive her from the unbearable heat back to the deck.

The glass was curtained so that she could not have seen anyone above. As the sound was not repeated she was finally about to turn away, when her eyes startingly discovered some object, like the point of a knife, pushing in between a leaf of the skylight and its frame. Staring, she saw that it *was* a knife. As the schooner listed, the metal gleamed once, again, in answer to the lamp. Then the point reached the hook that fastened the leaf, pushed it noiselessly from its socket.

The girl faltered back to the foot of the companion ladder. Did the skylight move? One inch, two, three. Then it stopped. The blade, advancing over the edge, turned diagonally, as if the unseen man were about to steady himself with that hand upon the woodwork while he leaned forward to peer in. But now the Pigeon of Noah staggered into a sea. The man, apparently caught off balance, was impelled toward the opening. The extended hand

must have rammed against the edge of the raised leaf, for the knife was knocked from its fingers. Projected into the cabin, the steel fell to the floor with a clatter.

The aperture having closed instantly at this mischance, Palmyra had stood, her gaze fixed first upon the skylight, then the knife. Her immediate thought had been that the hand was Olive's. Doing his trick as helmsman, he could have lashed the wheel, and no one was awake to see.

Had she really glimpsed those tattooed fingers, or was it merely that she felt nobody else would have dared Burke's anger? Might it, after all, not have been one of the other natives? Or could Olive have acted on orders from a white master, bent on frightening her again? She gave these consideration, but only to strengthen her original feeling. Instinct was too strong.

She had at last picked up the knife. It was sharp pointed, sharp edged. She had hidden it in her dress. And there she had carried it since and no one had made any sign. So she had a weapon, but with it a greater fear of the brown savage.

For two days she had had the knife. Now, in the mid-hours of the third night, she was again lying in the cabin awake. There were circles under her eyes. Was it the heat, the roaches, or the fear of that hand at the skylight which kept sleep away?

She was thinking, however, not so much of the stealthy hand, as of a remark of Burke's, several times repeated, which had assumed the significance of a threat. "Better volunteer that kiss while the volunteering's easy," he had warned, his grim good



humor in the last hour or two, as she felt, growing a little thin. "For I can tell y'this: There won't be no evading the draft—once she clamps down."

What had he meant?

The night was again, she thought, at about the hour when the hand had lifted the skylight. Now, as then, the heavy breathing. The slip-slap of sea against the planking was taking on a rhythmic value. It was the shadow of a rod on the side of the lamp, rather than the blot on the cabin floor, that now held her leaden gaze. It moved with the cadence of ship and sea like the baton of an orchestra leader. In a moment her aching eyes would have closed in slumber.

But, all at once, there sounded the thud of bare feet on the deck overhead. The girl sprang up. She heard the patter of running steps, a voice insisting, "Ponapé! Ponapé!", the growl of the awakened Burke. A moment of confusion, a low-voiced order or two by the white man, and then, unexpectedly, a peremptory concussion of knuckles on the skylight.

"Douse that lamp down there," came Burke's command. "Palm—d'y'hear me? Douse that glim."



## CHAPTER XX

### THE DELUGE

WHEN Palmyra came on deck on this, the fourth day of her captivity, she saw that Ponapé Burke was in an ugly mood. An empty bottle from a case of Rainbow liqueur rolled back and forth across the deck, and the case itself, open, was wedged in against the hatchway.

The man greeted her with alcoholic leer, his infantile features shocking in their age-old depravity. Thus, perhaps, might Original Sin have looked had he been photographed in his baby days for future generations.

When she shrank back into the companion he was amused. "Come, come, Queenie," he roared. "Are y'ready with that kiss?" He bellowed with laughter. Then, when she did not advance, he changed to the quick anger of intoxication. "Have it yer way, Miss Tree—Miss *Palm* Tree," he said thickly. "But 'twon't be long before you're down on yer shins a-praying the Lord for just one chance t'beg me t'take the dam' kiss—and you sick with fear I won't want it."

The girl cast a supplicating glance toward the audience of her tragedy, the island crew. Naked, except for kilt or cotton trousers rolled to the knee, they sensed a climax by their master's tone, by her frightened eyes. But she felt they sympathized, understood, no more than a pack of wolves.

As for Olive, he sat negligently, cross-legged on the hatch, beaming upon all with that awful complacency of the graven Buddha before the tragedies of man; too trivial to becloud, even momentarily, the serene brow.

Ponapé Burke, propped upon the deck against the weather bulwark, stared at the girl for some time with eyes intimate, appraising. Then he scrambled forward and took a second bottle of liqueur out of the case. Presently he glanced up from the label, grinned at Palmyra in an evil humor, shouted an order to the native at the wheel. The sailor put three spokes down and the schooner altered its course.

Another native, alacritously active to trim sail, stumbled and stepped on one of Burke's feet. The white man, with an agility that would have seemed impossible, was upon him instantly, and had felled him with the bottle. The glass broke on the brown skull, showering the islander with liquor as a christened ship, as if it had been Burke's intention to launch him for that greater voyage upon the eternal sea.

From the crew there rose the stealthy "tch tch" of tongues between slightly parted teeth, which is the safest of all forms of protest. The master stood over his man, for the moment seemingly minded to jab and twist the end of the broken bottle into the flesh of the upturned face. Then, with an oath, he tossed the weapon overboard and turned away toward Palmyra, while the victim got to his feet, half inclined, despite the fiery liquid in his scalp, to make a joke of it.

Ponapé rolled aft to the girl. "Sweetheart," he said, "I'm going t'part with you."

She did not understand.

"Dam' them Japs!" he exploded, his temper taking a new direction. "'Twas their man-o-war we sighted last midwatch."

So that had been the cause of the alert, with its brief but real excitement.

"Thought their ship had nosed out o' this part o' the group," he explained, "or I'd sure not be here. Risky enough anyhow, but . . ." He grimaced, shrugged. "With you aboard? *Ta-a-alofo* good night!"

Aforetime in the Carolines and the Marshalls, ran Burke's complaint, America was aces high. Intervening Spanish and German control hadn't made 'em forget their first friends: the American whalers, the American missionaries, the American traders. They wanted American rule, looked up to Americans, treated 'em right.

But what a difference when the war gave the mandate to Japan. If a fellow wanted to go into the islands he had to have a permit from Tokyo—and couldn't get it. The handful of resident whites scattered throughout the mandate must send to Truk for a pass every time they wanted to move out of their group. Even the American missionary in the Carolines had a four months' wait for authority to make each two-day voyage across.

And as for trading? The new four-power treaty of Washington might, of course, loosen things up. Probably would. But until lately, said Burke, the remaining whites—men who'd grown old trading

there—weren't allowed to handle a pound of copra or a yard of calico. And as regarded trading vessels, there wasn't any such thing. Only two permits ever issued, and those limited.

"And me here a-sailing bang into the eye o'their patrol after breaking all their silly rules," marvelled Burke. "Might a been boarded any minute by one o'them starched Orientals. And I reckon," he added, with an appreciative cackle, his good humor momentarily restored by the picture; "I reckon he'd be some surprised to come, unexpected-like on such a little beauty as you on my plain old hooker.

"Wouldn't understand, would he, Mr. Jap," tittered Burke, "how the likes o'me and the likes o' you was plumb made for each other? Pirates, by Gad—blood born some too late on to an ocean all cluttered up with civilization. But good sports still, rough and tough and ready."

He swayed toward her and her hand flew for the hidden knife. But, with timely prudence, he recollected his wound. Moved by a new impulse he tacked away across the deck to the case of liqueur. He stooped to take a bottle, hesitated, drew back and gave the box a kick.

The man's suggestion of parting with her, the possibility of Japanese intervention, had brought the color of hope to her cheeks.

But he, returning now, struck at that hope with malicious perception. "Oh, safe enough in three or four days," he reassured. "They'll be gone then for a good six months. It's only in the meantime we got t'lay low. But in the meantime—ruin everything you t'be caught aboard."

He glowered at her, his surliness coming back upon him. "And besides," he added grimly, "'tis time, my pretty princess, y'was climbing down from yer perch on the crosstrees. I got patience. But y'can't make a monkey o'me on my own deck before my own crew." His voice rose angrily. "I say I'm tired of it. I'm master here and I'll master you." His sense of injury was all at once stupendous. "You . . . you . . ." he began, then ended abruptly: "There's a bit island t'lee."

She tried to fathom his purpose.

"I'm going t'jettison you. Y'shall stop ashore."

She stared at him. Incredulous hope roused again, only to fall before his expression. He had not the slightest thought of relinquishing her.

Burke was amused. "'Tis a bonny isle," he said, "and you'll have naught t'do but sit and think o' me."

The girl's spirits rose. She did not question that this would be some depot of his, a place of servile natives. But, even so, her position would be bettered. Surely, among them all, must be those to understand, to respond to her plea for protection.

She was eager to go. But she thought it wise to seem indifferent. She waited until Burke turned away, then scanned the sea.

But no land rewarded her, nor, though she continued to strain her eyes, had she found any by noon. As the day wore on toward its close she worked herself into a passion of suspense, apprehension. Burke was still drinking: what if night should find her aboard?

And then, when it seemed she could stand no

more, she discovered that the man Olive, grinning enthusiastically, was putting water, ship's biscuit and some other stores into a boat.

In surprise, she swept the sea again—and found it blank. "Why, when do we get there?" she asked of Burke.

He smiled sardonically. "We're there now," he answered.

She was completely at a loss.

He handed her his binoculars. "Hard a-star-board," he directed.

Presently she made out, through the glasses, that which might be the crest of palms. The island seemed far distant.

But the Pigeon of Noah had held to her course for no great time when her master gave the order to heave to, and lower away the boat.

"But it's so far," she hesitated.

Burke winked at Olive, already at the oars, then dropped over the side without reply. Palmyra, disdaining his proffered hand, followed. The savage bent to his work and they were away, under the stare of the crew.

All too soon the girl saw why she had thought the island distant. As with each stroke of the oars it rose in its stark meagerness, her heart sank. So small, so flat, its four cocoa-palms so stunted, it was well nigh invisible to the novice.

"You beast!" she cried at last, as with every moment she perceived more clearly what a prison was hers. "You beast!"

She might have paid him a compliment, he was so pleased.



"Speaking o'royalty," he tittered, "wasn't it Napoleon as was took t'Elbey island t'cool off a spell?"

The reef was all a-wash except for the spit of coral clinkers and blinding sand which was to be her jail. One glance told her there could be no inhabitants. The four dwarfed palms, a scraggy clump of pandanus—and that was everything. A place far smaller, more desolate than the scene of the wreck.

The savage seaman brought the boat through the coral in lee of the islet, then carried his master ashore. Burke he lifted on his brown back, but when he returned for the girl, she saw he meant to carry her in his arms. He stood above her, looking down with those strange eyes, his great square teeth gleaming. He seemed to exult, in some brute way, over her abandonment.

The girl drew back. But, imperturbably, like a machine, he bent forward and she, shrinking helplessly from contact with the bare warm flesh, was borne aloft across his forearms, like a child, and deposited upon the beach.

The moment her feet touched the sand she hurled herself at the white man.

"Belay there, sweetheart," he laughed, retreating. "Steady does it. Didn't I tell y' you'd have plenty o'time t'sit and think o'me?"

Pride helped her to hold back the tears.

"And you'll be safe," he added, "except a tidal wave or storm, which ain't much likely this time o'year."

He had to shout. The surf on the weather reef was so close the islet seemed fairly to tremble, and

her lips were salt with the waft of the wind-whipped crests.

"And you'll not be interrupted-like with social distractions," he went on. "There's three hundred islands in the Marshalls—three hundred. And the outside world gets into just two of 'em. Once in eight weeks a steamer. Elsewheres, as I've told you, white men and schooners never stir. The Japs in the group—less'n two hundred—is mostly away off at Jaluit or Wotje, and there's not a pound o'copra t'bring anyone here. Man-o'-war'll be gone months. And even if she wasn't, she patrols too much territory ever t'visit uninhabited reefs like this, or where the Rainbow crowd's castaway."

He delighted in visualizing her helplessness.

"That leaves y'only yer own folks and the kanakas," he added. "As for yer outfit, when they do get took off after months, and starts looking for you, a needle in a haystack'd shine out like a beacon compared t'you lost among these here uncharted reefs."

He paused to gloat, as if, having himself created this coral labyrinth for the very purpose, he looked upon his work and found that it was good.

"As for the kanakas," he concluded contemptuously, "they're devil ridden, till they dasn't hardly visit the lonesome weather side o'even their own home island, let alone a place like this with a rep for devil work. They *never* come here—not within a good sea mile."

When she made no comment he beamed upon her again with an affectation of reassurance. "Oh, y' will be safe enough from intrusion, kid. I'll guar-

antee that. I know 'cause I've tried the bit island before. Kept a gent here once nigh on to six months."

She could not repress a shudder.

"Nice sort," explained Burke, "but unbusiness-like. We was shares in a deal and he thought he could hold out my half o'the loot. And no end stubborn. *Aue!* Stuck it out here more'n three months before he even begun t'seem glad t'see me when I dropped in. But after that, I'll say for him, he warmed up rapid. By the time I agreed t'take him off he'd of quit-claimed me his entire right and interest in the Kingdom o'Heaven—free and generous."

Her lips set desperately.

"Y'got water and stores for six weeks or so and housekeeping'll be easy-like," grinned her despot. "Y'just set in the shade and munch yer biscuit and think o'me." He dramatized his comedy. "Think o'me and keep a-saying: 'That Ponapé, he ain't such a bad lot. Not a bad looker neither and the lad God made for *me*.'"

"And then, sometime, maybe you'll sight the old Pigeon loafing by. And if you're tired o'yer own company, y'can hist yer hanky for a signal. And perhaps I'll be such a good kind gent as t'lay y'aboard again, me understanding what you're after is t'rush up and give me that kiss."

She clenched her teeth behind the closed lips.

He turned as if to go. Then, casually in a well-considered effect, he called Olive to fetch that of which the girl had not thought in days,—a pink silk parasol.

With a flourish Ponapé Burke presented this gay

trifle which, alone of all the world that she had known, had escaped the deluge. "For my queen," he said with mock ceremony. "Fresh complected folks has a tender skin. If queenie should show up offering a kiss all blistered like a biled lobster—why, maybe that kiss wouldn't so much be wanted. And, remember: 'tis a kiss, free given and free taken, pays a passage from this reef."

He sprang upon the stooping back of his fellow to be carried to the boat. He rode high, his legs, on either side of the brown torso, doubled, and supported by Olive's hand, under each shin, as a stirrup. With his arm round the sailor's neck, and leering down at her, he seemed a veritable little Old Man of the Sea.

The girl stood looking after them, leaning on the parasol in an unintentionally formal attitude. She noted all these details with an intensity of interest, as if it might be she would never see human beings again.

When the boat had cleared the reef, Ponapé Burke rose to wave her a jaunty adieu.

When they were half way to the schooner, the girl uttered a sob and, flinging down the parasol, ran after them until she stood in the surf. Then, slowly, she turned and came back to the palms and threw herself upon the sand—prone.

And, oddly enough, as she lay, it was not the white man's cruel humor that revolted her so much as the brown man's mirth. For Burke had a purpose, but Olive's was a mere savage delight in pain.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LEER OF FEAR

THE sun was low in the sky when Palmyra Tree was thus abandoned. For long she lay, her face on her arms. Then she sprang up. Stricken by a dread that the Lupé-a-Noa might no longer be in view, it seemed to her as if life itself depended on sighting those sails. For she had never before been utterly alone, the only breathing thing in a whole world of sky and waters.

The land was so flat that the surf seemed, on all sides, to rise to the level of her gaze. She could hardly more see out of her island than over a garden wall. But one of the palms offered an observation point. In its first days it had been bowed by a gale so that its bulbous base now rose at an obtuse angle, and she could stand several feet along the trunk, steadying herself with a hand on one of the nut clusters.

Yes, there the schooner was, a tiny triangle of white against the sky. The girl stood, motionless, watching until it was gone. Then she told herself that she was glad. "I hope I never, never see it again," she burst out. "And if no other vessel comes, I'll stay until I die."

Nor was she assuming that Ponapé Burke had exaggerated her isolation. She knew even Mrs. Crawford had had trouble in getting a permit to enter the group.



Following each plunging concussion of the surf there was a pause of lessened tumult. These intervals had seemed a relief. But now the schooner was gone they began to play upon her nerves. As if she had not terrors enough, she actualized the entombed silence which otherwise would have been hers: a silence to crush her as physically as the earth of a grave. Only this rush and roar of waters kept alive within her any sense of life.

She jumped down from her observatory. But a moment later she was scrambling back up. She had said that in the whole world she alone was alive. Now, however, across the coral clinkers a something was coming, moving eccentrically, yet approaching at an alarming speed. A something alive? Or was it, rather, mechanical, wound by a spring like a nursery animal, stamped out of painted tin? It was gay with red polka-dots, its eyes goggled as from exophthalmic goitre, it ran with the exaggeration of a toy, seeming about to stumble at each step, yet zig-zagging over the clinkers in an astonishing ease and rapidity. And, in place of coming head on, it hurried sidewise.

Unexpectedly, the girl laughed. Youth demanded, with its tragedy, a comic interlude. This nursery beast would presumably be no more than a land crab.

Somewhat intimidated, however, she backed a step further up the palm. The intruder on her island—or was she not rather the intruder?—hastened toward her, claws already half extended, as a hostess with hands out to greet a belated guest.

Was this, the girl demanded to know, the sort of



crab that climbed a tree? She had read of them and the distinction seemed important. With claws like a tinsmith's shears they cut through husk and shell of the fallen cocoanuts, or if they could find none on the ground, swarmed right up after them.

But her polka-dotted hostess showed no such inclination and, on closer inspection, was assuredly no more than a second cousin to this fierce and monstrous cocoanut thief.

"How do you do?" the girl asked conciliatingly. "No, I won't shake hands, if you'll excuse me. I shook hands with a prize fighter once, but never again. And *he* couldn't crush in a shell with *his* thumb." She smiled and then added politely: "I hope you'll like me. For you're sure to see a lot of me in the next few days—or, or years."

Her voice broke. But she fought back the panic. She resolutely forced herself to recollect one of Burke's stories.

"The first time I ever lays foot on Onoatoa," he had said, "I sees that the largest and most ferocious wild animal there is the cocoanut crab. Hostile and elusive, yet edible t'a degree. But them kanakas are so lazy and timid and uningenious-like that there they sets, their tongues hanging out with envy, but unsatisfied. What is wanted, I observes, is a method, sedentary and safe.

"I watches them crabs gamboling about in the moonlight, and then I gathers some *atat*—that little green stuff which grows all over the ground—and makes me a nice fluffy wreath.

"Then I locates a crab up a tree. I sneaks over, climbs them holes the kanakas cuts in the base,

reaches as high as I can, and twines my wreath round the trunk. After which we wait.

"Presently, Mr. Crab, having snipped off two or three nuts, begins t'clamber down backwards, which is his way o' clambering down. When at last his hind feet touches my wreath he pauses for a good breath, and says he t'himself: 'Well, here we are back on the ground again.' And then, mistaken-like, he lets go with all his other feet and—bam!—down he comes on his bean. The kanakas springs at him with their clubs while he lays there stunned, and in a minute everything's over and him being drug off t'the oven."

"Which shows," Burke had concluded, "the superiority o' the white mind. Them Onoatoa folks gets plenty o'crab meat thenceforth, and I gets their copra monopoly t'the exclusion o'all other competitors whatsoever."

The polka-dotted crab had now gone "polkadoddering" on its way. It had kept her mind, for the moment, from the fact that the sun was sinking at a frightful speed. As the luminary neared the ocean he seemed fairly to slip and slide down toward the final plunge. At the horizon he clung for an instant to send one last beam straight into her eyes, gilding in its level course ten thousand waves. Then—the sun was gone.

Briefly, the western sky shone with his glory. Her eyes on this treacherous illumination, Palmyra did not note the stealthy shadows that seemed to rise behind her from the surface of the sea—ready to leap in upon her. But, as she watched, the light faded, failed. Then the stars popped on, as if waiting

in ambush, and the girl, caught unawares, cried out that the night had come.

She stood, uncertain, frightened. She had meant to plan, and now it was too late. She wondered if Burke had granted her a box of matches. But, then, there would have been little enough to burn.

The four clustering palms gave a sense of shelter and she was too agitated to be aware of hunger. She threw herself down on the sand.

It was a luxury, at least, to be free of that stifling cabin, to breathe the sweet clean air, to know none of those cockroaches could fall upon her face. She sighed, almost as with content.

And then, there flashed back into her mind a word Burke had taught her, a native name for the monstrous robber crab. It was *unga po*—the *night* crab! In fright she sprang up, stared around. The very fact she had seen the one, presupposed presence of the other. To realize that her polka-dotted absurdity might now be blundering near in search of prey was sufficiently disquieting; proximity of its fierce cousin legitimately alarming. For, with claws more than a foot long, it could snap the strongest bonito line like a thread, crush the bones of a man's fingers, cripple for life the wrist of a well grown youth.

Horror returned upon her. She struggled back to her observation post. She must sight a ship instantly—now, *now! now!!*

By day the thunder of the surf had been but a noise. In the dark it became a menace. The trade wind, blowing in her face, was urging the seas on to their attack upon the reef. All else was invisible, but in the starlight she could see them coming, those

white-foamed crests. On the unseen water they looked like white horses rearing and plunging; the cavalry of Old Neptune. They were terrifying thus, lunging into sight, falling, springing up again—nearer, always nearer.

It seemed each moment that they must override the barrier, that she should feel about her, over her, their trampling rush. She could no longer bear to see, to hear. She sprang down, fled to leeward, covered her eyes, her ears.

It came back to her that, at home over breakfast coffee, she had read of atolls buried by the sea in storm, the clean breach of waters uprooting houses and palms, sweeping the people away like insects. The Marshalls were low, the old capital, Jaluit, rising to a scant eight feet. Was it not this very group which had been inundated some fifteen or twenty years ago with great loss of life? Had someone not told her that the Japs at two or three of the lagoons were even now replanting trees, recently levelled?

Here, understanding that her four palms might be so small because their predecessors had been washed away, she marveled at how meaningless, how unreal those printed accounts had seemed.

In this new perception she was for the first time sensing the thought of the savage Olive—and the compliment paid—when he had compared her to the palm tree, brave to set its roots out into the surf where all others fear to grow.

Another of Ponapé Burke's stories returned as a legacy of fright. Physically absent, this man still dominated her. A friend of his had been trading in the Gilberts. One day the ocean began to rise above

the normal. Dignified, unhurried, it advanced until, as the trader stood on the highest point of ground, the water reached to his shoulders. There he stood for hours in mid-Pacific. Then the tidal wave, with the same placid unhurry, receded, and left the island once more land, and with small harm done.

"But," Burke had concluded, "it undermined-like his morale and he quit trading in the low islands and went t'a mountain group, where there was plenty o'room for a good man at the top."

The girl threw herself down again, fingers clutching at the sand. By day she had thought that life on this islet, so low, so small in the midst of sky and sea, would be like life on a ship. Now the sensation was intensified: it was as if she were on a raft, as if she must hold tight or the next wave would rush in and wash her away.

But if her mind suffered, her body at least was in comfort. On these low islands, unlike the volcanic chains, there is no land breeze, with set of sun, to come filtering down out of the high bush, ghostly, chill, moving no blade of grass nor leaf of tree, yet filling the air with the breath of dead mold, of living blossom. Moreover, the sea breeze, that by day had been a fresh breeze, with night became, by reason of the faster cooling of the land, a warm breeze. She had no fire, no shelter, and she needed none.

As she lay she moved, once and again, until her face was upturned toward the stars. Gradually she began to be aware of them—acutely. Dominated by land and sea she had not, till now, thought of the sky. But, staring up, she wondered if, in her whole



existence, she had ever before really looked at the heavens. For here were not the remote constellations of northern latitudes, coldly silvered as with a reflected light. Here, in unthinkable profusion and size, from zenith straight down to horizon, were the stars of tropic ocean, alive with flame.

By day the lowness of the land had brought the skyline closer than she had ever imagined. Yet she had had no fancy of herself imprisoned, like a fly in a trap, under the inverted bowl of the sky. But it is an awesome thing to be there, alone in the waste of waters, under that same bowl when it is ablaze, and not one object the whole circle round to blot out a single star. So incredibly small and low did the bowl now seem that once, as she gazed, she reached up her hand with a quaint assumption of timidity, as if she were afraid that she might scorch her fingers against one of those flaming points.

Early in the Rainbow voyage she had read that in many of these equatorial islands the natives believe the sky anciently to have rested flat on the land, muffling it like a blanket and shutting out air and light. So closely drawn was the firmament that there was no room for human life. But the friendly sea-serpent pushed up the sky on his nose, like a canvas, and let in the sunshine; and the souls of men, held down as clods, sprang into being.

On the Rainbow she had marvelled at a conception so childish. But that was before she had lain here under this heaven which seemed, every moment, to crowd in closer upon her.

As she lay, she felt that those stars glared at her, personal, inimical. From the background of the



night they thrust at her in flaming interrogation. She was like the ant exposed in most secret labyrinth by the lifting of a stone. She had thought of herself as the only living being in the whole world. Now she seemed the only living being in all the universe—with the eyes of that universe centered upon her.

But, suddenly, from out the darkness, there came a hoarse cry.

The girl doubled into a ball, automatically, as sometimes, one awakened by a crash of thunder.

An interval; then she sat up and laughed—janglingly but with a good courage. It had been only a bird.

She was not, after all, the sole living fragment of creation. A bird had winged its way on the wind to her prison place to keep her company.

Tomorrow she would make friends, for birds on desert islands are not afraid.

Tomorrow a ship would come.

And tonight—she would be worthy her ancestors.

The girl snuggled back into the warm sand. At any rate it was something to be free of the roaches.

Palmyra slept.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PALMYRA DOES NOT "SIT AND THINK O'ME"

As Palmyra had been caught unawares by the approach of night, so now, with the eastern skies aglow with the coming day, she was again unawares, lying deep in slumber.

The sun, at his setting, had paused to implant upon her cheek a goodnight kiss. And it was not now until he had stolen clear round the world to bestow an awakening kiss upon the other cheek, had surmounted the Chinese wall of vapor raised against him by the morning bank, that her eyes opened.

Her first emotion was a despairing realization; her second found expression in an apprehensive survey of her person. But no predatory crab had snipped off fingers or toes. A moment later, with a laugh, she had mounted to her observatory and was scanning the sea.

At night, under the inquisitorial stars, unutterable space separated her from her loved ones. But now the sun had brought them close. They would be rescued soon and find her, or other aid would come. If she must believe Burke about white vessels, she certainly would not as to native craft. He'd asked too much of her credulity, depended too much on her fears. At any minute she was likely to sight a canoe, close in.

Not finding aid already come, she pounced down

on her stores for a drink of tepid water and two big round ship's biscuit. She was minded, with one of these in each hand, to start out for an exploration. She turned toward the meager growth of pandanus—most ridiculous of treelets: stilt-like roots that raised their trunks off the ground exactly as a music-rack stands on its legs; branches which seemed, with some effect as of a candelabrum, to uphold at their ends the leaf and fruit of the pineapple.

But there was so little else than these that a glance back and forth served somewhat to chill her early-morning courage. She mounted to her observatory again, preferring for the moment not to force upon her consciousness the rigid limitations of her island, the most open and, at the same time, most tightly closed of prisons. From the land she could hope nothing; from the sea everything.

"At the very worst," she reassured herself, "Burke will have drunk all his Rainbow liqueurs before he gets back, and I shall be safe meanwhile from that brown beast."

Some time in the night the tradewind, not as yet thoroughly established in its season, had died down. The air might have been within the Lupé-a-Noa's own cabin, it was so still. The surface of the water was as silk, but a silk in the agitation of the ocean swell, the never-ending dimple and rise and fall of the sea. First, the oily brine at one point would shoot up into a pinnacle, like a mountain peak from its valley. And then, the next moment, that mountain would sink into a hollow, and its very location would be blotted out by the rise of nearer cones.

As the girl stood on her tree, watching this ever-

changing panorama, she became aware that the waters abounded in life. Once and again the silken surface stirred to unseen hurryings, and then, with the ugly suggestion of a submarine tower rising into view, a big fin came cutting up from below, plowed the water in a long curve and submerged again.

As she gazed toward the skyline for the canoe she was determined to expect, she began to consider how she might attract attention. It would be tragic—them to pass and never know. But the surf would drown her voice; lacking matches, she could raise no smoke; her palm trees, by the nature of their growth, could not be used as flagstaffs; to wave a garment from the sands would serve only a limited utility.

She was peering up at the trees in perplexity, when the early sun, slanting down into her eyes, gave her an inspiration. If messages had been heliographed as far as seventy miles, couldn't she at least signal a nearby canoe with a small round mirror that happened, luckily, to be in her pocket? She drew it out. Only recently an impertinent youth had thus dazzled her own eyes from a window two blocks away. The thing seemed possible.

But her efforts to project the sun's rays out over the water soon brought discouragement. The chance, after all, was pitifully slight. As her only recourse it was just one degree better than sitting with folded hands to see her rescuers paddle away.

She would have continued to experiment, however, her eyes straining to note with what effect, had not a strange thing now happened. That bit of water upon which her gaze chanced to be fixed

rose up into a peak and there appeared a dark round object which resembled a head. Then the sea flattened out again and the pinnacle, with its round object, sank from sight.

The girl laughed scornfully. "Here it's only the first day," she jeered, "and already I'm seeing things. The nearest land three days' sail and—I see a head!" She was severe with herself. "Rather, you silly creature," she reproved, "you see a cocoanut in its husk. A cocoanut, do you hear?"

Briefly, to school her nerves, she refused to look. Then she turned her eyes once more to the sea. "Remember, girl," she warned, "when the water comes up next you'll observe that it *is* a cocoanut."

For a moment she waited, not so calm as she would have liked. Then the swell brought the dark object up to another peak and Palmyra gave a cry. It was so startlingly like a head! Could it, could it be?

In one tense circling scrutiny she swept the ocean. But no. Not a sail, not a canoe. Her eyes had deceived her.

When she looked again, however, all question ended. As the head bobbed up into view she saw an arm rise out of the water and reach forward.

The girl plunged down from her perch. She had been praying for intervention from the sea, and now—she was afraid. She turned to run, to hide. But where? The island was utterly devoid of cover. Panting, she sank behind the clump of pandanus.

For a long minute she covered her eyes with her hands. Then she gathered courage at last to look. The head, bobbing up and down like a cork, was coming as fast as a boat. Presently, as she stared

it reached the surf at a narrow opening of the reef. A few more strokes of arms, thick and brown, and the head of an islander rose dripping from the water.

And then it was that Palmyra uttered another cry. For she saw a copper face with great square teeth clamped on a knife—a knife that did not hide the ferocious grin which had haunted her since she first saw it thus under her spotlight: the face of the brown man Olive!





PART THREE

THE EMPTY MILLION MILES



## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE SAVAGE

WHEN the face of the savage Olive materialized to her view, the voice of the surf drowned that wail with which Palmyra Tree cowered back behind her screen.

The swimmer, rising from the brine, paused knee-deep to shake himself like a dog. Then he plucked the knife from between his teeth, thrust it into the leather sheath on his belt and came splashing ashore. He did not hesitate, but made direct for her hiding place, the only cover.

The girl sprang away in flight. The brown man, beaming terrifically, followed. She ran, stumbling now and again on the coral clinkers, until she reached land's end, and then on, as far as she could, along the reef a-wash. Seizing from the water a broken knob of coral, she faced the savage. When he reached the edge of the sand, she hurled it at him. Then her hand rose toward her dress where her own knife waited.

Olive, at the missile, grinned none the less. Indeed, he seemed unaware of it, though it passed within a foot of his head. But it did, nevertheless, have an effect—one quite unexpected. For he sat down, cross-legged, on the sand. He broke into the animation of speech. Several times the words came pouring forth, only to fail and fall before a realization of the world-wide barrier between them.

Thus they opposed each other: she tense, strained, her fair face sharp and desperate; he as silent, as motionless, but relaxed, secure; regarding her with an amiability that had its being in an intelligence as remote as the stone age itself.

Then he shrugged in relinquishment of the right of speech. He stood up, and the girl's hand flew back toward her weapon. But he came no nearer. To her surprise, he turned and went strutting away toward the clump of palms. There, with a gesture quite the reverse of that she would have used—a moving of the hand downward and in, rather than out and up—he beckoned her to follow.

For a time she hesitated. Then she waded ashore and stood, her skirt clinging about her knees, to watch his every movement. As he did not look her way again, she drew, gradually, a little nearer.

First, the savage pulled two of the half-grown cocoanuts. With his knife he cut through the two-inch green husk of one and exposed the lower end of the shell. From this, with three taps of the blade, he knocked a round cap. He took a big draft of the liquid within—cool, slightly acid, clear as water. Then he opened the second nut, brought it half way toward her, left it upright in the sand. She was, it seemed, invited to drink.

Back under the palms, Olive, with the cap of broken shell, scooped out, and ate, the jelly-like meat of the nut. Then he invaded her store of ship's biscuit and consumed three.

The girl watched, fascinated. He had always given her an impression mechanical, as of those cogs and levers that seem so leisurely while performing

such prodigies. Now she had a childlike feeling of him as a something, an elemental force incarnate, that had been set going and mere human will was powerless to oppose.

But if she were thus intently regardful of the grinning savage, he seemed to have forgotten her. He was cutting down two of the leaf-branches of a palm. He sheared off the lateral leaflets and the flexible half of the stalks, leaving himself two sections, perhaps six feet in length. Carrying these clear of the palms, he dug into the sand and planted them upright, about four feet apart.

Turning to the clump of pandanus, he hacked out a short slim pole. This he next, with cord from her stores, lashed across the top of his uprights. Then he marched away toward the reef and, reaching out as one might to pick a kitten up by the neck, snatched a fish from a pocket in the coral. This fish, flopping vigorously, he bound to the crossbar of his dwarfed football goal.

The girl had been watching these moves breathlessly, wonder for the moment getting the better of fear. Not until he fetched the fish did she have any theory. Then it flashed into her mind that barbarous peoples always propitiated their deities with food offerings. Could this be a sort of altar? Did the savage so seek to further his purpose?

But Olive gave no sign. With the last turn of the cord about the struggling fish, he strode away to the shade of the palms and, throwing himself down on his back, was almost instantly asleep.

Palmyra, crouching in the sun, stared at that figure. She was astonished. How was it physically



possible for him thus to fall into slumber? And did he hold her strength, her courage, in such contempt? True, she had never been sure he knew of her weapon. But he might well have feared she could crush in his skull with one of those coral boulders. She flushed in an odd resentment at his disdain. Her hand crept toward the opening of her dress. Then, with a gasp, she recalled it.

As he slept, she, for perhaps the first time, received a full impression of his bodily power; of the great chest as it rose and fell, of arms thick through as the massive calves. His thighs were tattooed solid in the Samoan manner and there was a small tattooed fish on the left breast. But so soaked the skin that the ink seemed a faded blue, and the inside of his hands and the soles of his feet were leached and puckered by hours in the sea.

As the girl waited she clasped and unclasped her own hands in an agony of doubt. How had this man come up out of the ocean? Had the Pigeon of Noah been seized by the Jap gunboat, or had she foundered? Had Olive alone escaped, or would others follow in a boat?

She remembered Burke's saying that if a white man fell into the sea he eventually drowned, but an islander was more likely to die of thirst. That, perhaps now, disposed of Burke himself if they had started in a boat and capsized.

Whence had this man come, and—why? Could Ponapé have sent him to terrorize her? Or had the savage . . .

She gave a shudder.

Nor was she reassured by the trust in her, Olive seemed to imply by surrendering himself to this deep sleep. For from so methodical a procedure, where one might well expect the ferocity of savage impulse, should she not argue that Burke had, indeed, been disposed of? The brown man would obviously admire, imitate, the master. Therefore, if Olive now felt her completely at his mercy, would he not naturally gratify himself with the same amused indulgence of her resistance that, in Burke, had expressed complete confidence in the power of mastery?

The girl's fear mounted, as never before, as she thought how those brown-suffused eyes had rested upon her in their animal stare, hour after hour and day after day on the Rainbow and then on the Lupé-a-Noa. Upon the instant she snatched the knife from her dress. She gripped its handle; she began to crawl toward that terrible figure.

But presently she hesitated, stopped. With a groan she sank down. She dropped the knife, buried her face in her hands. In resistance she could have fought like a tiger. But thus to creep upon a sleeping man?

For a time there seemed no alternative. Then she roused at the realization that, if she could not murder a sleeping man, she could at least disarm him. With Olive deprived of that knife, and her own retained, who could tell? She might have some shred of chance.

She put the blade into her dress and began again to crawl forward. She had got within a dozen feet of the savage, moving with caution, when unex-

pectedly, easily, almost as it seemed automatically, he opened his eyes and sat up. It was as if he had not been asleep at all; had, from the beginning, been waiting for her to do just this thing.

The girl shrank back. Olive fixed her with his strange eyes. Then he smiled expansively, as if it were a joke. He settled down once more, instantly returned to slumber.

Palmyra stared. She was sure he had been asleep, sure he was asleep now. Then how had he known? If she had come over the coral some metallic note might have warned him. But it had been sand. How could he have caught her? And, having caught her once, how again trust her, or his own powers, so implicitly? Absolutely, he must have the senses, the instincts, of a wild beast.

As she continued to watch, the sun mounted steadily, and the white puckering of the sleeper's hands and feet gradually gave way to the smooth normal tone. The trade wind, for some time now, had been back at work. Having taken the night off, this methodical breeze had come bustling back belatedly, but full of business; had caught the sea at its aimless swell and dimple, and set the waves to rights for the carrying of commerce-laden keels.

The girl, still in her agony of doubt, had waited what seemed an eternity, when, sudden, startling in that place of solitude, there came a sound. It had not been Olive. She sprang up, circled land and water in a quick scrutiny. Nothing. The surf, the busy bustle of the breeze among the leaves—and that was all.

At snapping tension Palmyra strained to catch the sound again. Her eyes sought to weather and to lee. And then her gaze became fixed. For there, on the crossbar where Olive had fastened the fish, sat a large bird.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE BIRD AND THE WORD

It was the sound of the bird's alighting that Palmyra had caught. The roost was now swaying under the impact, the newcomer shooting in and out its neck in a somewhat serpent-like concordance. The creature was black, its feet disproportionately small, and the beak, strongly hooked at the end, a good five inches long.

The bird gazed back at the girl with some defiance of manner, as if it thought she might claim the fish. Then it lumbered along the pole and seized the victim, which managed a final flop.

Only now did Palmyra realize that, from the first, she had been subconsciously aware many birds maneuvered above. But she had been too agitated to think of them in this connection. Could it be that Olive had known he could attract one down by baiting such a lighting place?

News of the arrival had, in some manner, communicated itself to the sleeper. He awoke, stretched himself, glanced at the sun. Then he gave a careful inspection to the sea. Grinning, he made some remark, whether to herself or to the bird, she could not say. But he seemed to require no answer.

From his countenance she could not guess whether he had expected to find a bird on the cross-bar, or whether he was pleased. Nor were his actions illum-

inating. With the leisured velocity that was so disturbing an attribute, he first cut from a small cane-like growth a section the length of a finger. Then he shaved another piece down to a point. She thought he might intend pinning something with it. But he turned to her stores and tore out some thin package paper. This he laid on a box. With the knife he pricked his left forearm so that the blood came. Then with the blood and the skewer he began to write, presumably to make some sort of hieroglyphics.

The girl laughed hysterically. From the incomprehensible to the absurd. Childhood's melodrama! To write in blood: the oath at midnight. But she saw why this fiction so often served. Blood was indeed the only writing medium always available.

She was astonished when this savage turned to penmanship. The writing of notes seemed so much a property of civilization. But, now she thought of it, there had been all along, tattooed on Olive's arm in letters of her own alphabet, evidence that these remote islanders really did read: the name which had ordained that he, alone of living men, should be here today on this island with her.

The bird on his roost had swallowed the fish and sat drowsing. Palmyra was busy in the dusty filing-places of her mind for something she had read or been told. Surely, this must be the man-o'-war hawk? Why, of course. She'd forgotten because it hadn't meant anything—then.

But on many of these equatorial islands the natives tamed this bird; a thing easy because the creature, though a fish eater, never fished; depended



in large part on snatching game from other fowl. All man had to do was to keep him a while on such a rest and feed him there. Then, liberated and floating over one island or another, he would understand that the feeding places meant free fish, and drop down for dinner. The natives thus from earliest days had used these birds like pigeons to carry tokens and small useful objects, and more latterly, it was now plain, messages.

While Olive finished his composition the girl watched in a paralyzing anxiety. What did he write? What was in this message that meant more than life and death to her? She sprang up once to demand a sight, then remembered she could not have understood.

The savage now folded his paper small, worked it into the hollow section of cane, closed the opening with a wad of leaf. He went to the bird, which seemed not to object, and tied the missive under one of its wings. Then he lifted it from the roost and tossed it into the air. Instantly astonishing pinions flashed out, a spread of six or eight feet.

As the bird rose, Palmyra's hands went up as if to follow. "Oh, what, what *did* you write?" she cried, unconscious until the brown man turned, that she had spoken aloud.

What word indeed did the man-o'-war hawk carry as it mounted, hung for an interval, its forked tail opening and shutting like a pair of sheep-shears, and then was off down the wind with the speed of a rocket? What word, and to whom?

To Burke himself? She rejected the possibility. The bird would not alight on a ship.

To summon aid for herself? The idea was fantastical.

True, a white sailor might have been roused to chivalrous daring, might for an innocent girl have risked death from his tyrant's pistols. Could Olive, by any remote chance, have felt the heroic call?

But no. He was of another world. Limitless leagues of latitude, all the barriers of tradition and blood and color; the gulf that is fixed between civilization and naked man delving with shell adze, making fire by the friction of wood upon wood—across these his soul could not reach, could not interpret, respond to, the cry of her own.

If his purpose had been to save her from Burke, not to gain her for himself, he would have acted at Wreck island. Familiar with his master's every move, he must have known the white man's intention.

Olive could have swum ashore; despite the language difficulty contrived a warning. Or, when they had come aboard, there had been opportunities: as when Burke was wounded, or when Olive helped him off with the bloody coat. True, the ever-ready revolvers were deadly then, deadly now. If Burke still sailed the seas, any failure of Olive's plan meant death. But the fact Olive was here proved the thing. If he could dare since, he could have dared then.

She tried to be fair, to grant him every extenuation. Perhaps the native crew had prevented. Could it be that they, as much as Burke himself, had had to be considered?

But again, no. She saw too clearly now. Burke had said this strange being's purpose was to demon-

strate to all, by his courage, that he could live down the effeminate name of Olive. He called himself *O-lee-vay*, but Burke, in a perverse enjoyment of the brown man's dislike, stuck to the effeminating form. Very well, then. *All*, should include his own master.

In despoiling Burke of the red-haired goddess, Olive but reached the climax of his demonstration. He had chosen the one thing that would most enrage the white man; was, therefore, the most dangerous to attempt—and the most convincing.

He had coveted her: he had taken her. And Ponapé had been unable to prevent.

All too plainly the message the man-o'-war bird carried could have but one destination: Olive proclaimed his daring; demanded that his clansmen come to his aid.

## CHAPTER XXV

### DEVIL AND DEEP SEA

THE brown man Olive was unaware of, or unmoved by, Palmyra's misery. As soon as he had launched the bird, he pulled down its perch. He waited, as one might assume in a considerable anxiety, to see what course it would take. Then, with one of the uprights, he marched to the lee beach and began marking on the tidal sands.

The girl watched tragically. Until now there had seemed hardly a choice as to her fate. If she had, with the knife, succeeded in eliminating Olive, Burke would have returned to possess her. Or if disaster had eliminated Burke, then terrible solitude, with death from thirst.

But now, that messenger a mere speck in the sky, the highest thing as it seemed in the world, instinct within her had taken a stand. Beast that Burke was, he was at least better than this savage. A man of her own race, there was always the chance some appeal might reach through.

Olive, meanwhile, patiently rubbing the rounded butt of the leaf back and forth on the hard, moist sand, had cut a groove several inches deep, running up from the water. Next he made lighter marks, sharp-edged, and paralleling the groove. He seemed endlessly particular. Finally he stood back and grinned approval. The girl had been unable to

guess his purpose, but here she discovered that the markings had taken on a familiar look. It was as if a boat—a clinker-built boat she believed they called it—had been drawn up on the beach. Was that what he intended?

Crouching amidst the incandescent coral clinkers she was so intent as to be unaware of the flame of sunshine. When Olive, having finished his work, turned toward her, she gathered herself for flight, But he stopped, safely distant, and she divined that he meant to attempt an exchange of ideas.

First, he pointed in the direction the Lupé-a-Noa had gone. When Palmyra did not understand, he picked up a piece of the fabric, buckram-like, with which nature binds fast her palm leaves. He folded it into a form roughly triangular and smaller end up. He held it out, blew at it, moved it slowly from him as he did so. He represented a sail; he referred to the schooner itself.

The girl nodded comprehendingly. She had never before considered how easily ideas might be conveyed without words.

Next, Olive, grinning successfully at her perception, marked a semi-circle on his forehead. She was puzzled until she recalled the scar on Burke's forehead. Again she nodded.

Once more Olive pointed to the scar to indicate that the white man was now the actor. As Burke, he yawned drowsily, lay down and began to snore. The girl took it that Ponapé had gone to sleep for the night. The islander next got up, pointed to the place he had lain as the white man, and then to six other places in a row, snoring reinforcingly as he

made an inclusive gesture. All, she saw, had been asleep.

Olive now indicated himself as the actor, by tapping his breast with a square forefinger. Cautiously, peering to this side and that, pausing to look back and listen, he tiptoed away. With a final furtive glance, he raised himself, jumped as one going over the vessel's side into the water, simulated the movements of a swimmer. Palmyra read that, as soon as Burke and the crew had turned in last night, Olive had eluded the vigilance of the man on duty, dropped overboard and swum back to her.

So, then, the one being on earth who knew of her existence here, still sailed the seas. There had been no accident, no man-o'-war. And the savage had returned of definite purpose and without a boat.

He went on with his drama. Making again the sign of the scar, he pretended to awake. He looked around, said, "Olive?"; depicted surprise, anger. Drawing his knife ferociously, he kicked the imaginary sleepers into life, bellowed an order. He blew into his cupped hand, which was now sufficient to indicate the sail, performed the evolution of coming about; walked toward the girl, blowing into his hand and brandishing the knife.

She held her ground, understanding that the enraged pursuit returned to her. Olive stopped, pointed to the sun and then to a spot somewhat further along in the luminary's course. A sweeping gesture, a grimace, a stamping of the foot upon the sand; and he had said, as plain as words, that here Burke would step within an interval appallingly brief.



Palmyra Tree was shocked. Only a few minutes before, she had wanted that messenger to be her own, warning the white man to save her from the brown. But this was when she had supposed Burke would think Olive drowned. The term "man overboard," was more familiar than the idea of anyone deliberately choosing, in mid-ocean night, to swim for hours. She had thought Ponapé, mourning his Man Tuesday, would sail on, suspecting nothing amiss, and not return to the island until the time originally intended. She had felt so completely in Olive's power that she had been praying for the bird to fetch the clansmen quickly. There might be some among them to whom she could make an appeal.

It was only now she saw that Burke would at once guess the truth, at once put his schooner about, hot-foot, to follow. And it was now, illogically, with rescue thus imminent, that she recoiled. A Burke, far away and beyond call, might seem the lesser of two evils. But a Burke, rising over the horizon as fast as a storm, regained all his vile significance.

The girl tried to visualize the details of that return. She saw Olive drop overboard, sooner or later after dark, the schooner drive on, perhaps, for hours before the wind. Then, with discovery of his treason, the calm had held the Pigeon. And now she was having a dead beat back to windward.

But that assumed, didn't it, an Olive swimming possibly for much of the night? There must be details she didn't understand. But this much *was* plain: here stood Olive and here, within two hours, would stand Burke. And that being so, what about the *bird and its message!*

Again, all was inexplicable. With the white brute hot upon the heels of the brown brute, there could be no such waiting as she had assumed, while a bird irresponsibly delivered its summons and rescuing tribesmen came across the sea. Then, why the message at all?

In her new understanding, the girl was paying a greater tribute to the brown man's valor. She had thought it bold enough, to thwart Burke's passion, even when there was at least a fortnight in which to escape. But now that Olive had deliberately provoked a deadly encounter, here on this island and at once, she was saying that he could indeed have chosen no better way of proving his courage.

He had sent that message as a forlorn hope. Yet he was showing none of the strain which should have gone with so desperate a race. Indeed, his very calm frightened her. It was unnatural. He must expect, with a knife, to fight for her possession against Burke, with the deadly revolvers, and backed by the crew. Facing such terrible odds, no white man could have been so unemotional.

No, there must be a something else in that remote mind; a something absolutely alien to Caucasian experience; a, a something—pagan. She moistened parched lips. Could it be that he had come here to await Burke's arrival and then, almost within Ponapé's grasp, to plunge the knife into her breast—and himself die? Was there that in his dark beliefs, traditions, to make such an act exquisitely worth the sacrifice; a supreme manifestation, say, of hate for his tyrant; a degradation in this island world eternally to make of the white man a mock?

True, there was nothing of frenzy in his manner. All his actions spoke of life. But the whole situation was so impossible that she could find no explanation based on civilized man's psychology.

Meanwhile the savage had dismissed for the time being his pantomime. He took a drink of water, opened and ate two green cocoanuts and helped himself again to the ship's biscuit. He offered her another cocoanut and pointed to the water and food. When she did not partake, he brought these to her. She had eaten really nothing since the preceding noon and now discovered herself famished. She saw, moreover, that he was determined she should eat and drink.

While she complied, he gathered a number of the ripe nuts, that hung or lay in their brown and withered husks. He selected fourteen of these. He made a cut at the point of each husk and peeled back to the stem an inch-wide strip of the strong skin.

Pausing in this operation, as if the idea had just occurred to him, he pointed at her interrogatively and made the swimming gesture. Palmyra could paddle about trivially but she did not consider that swimming. She shook her head, and Olive resumed his work. Evidently it was of no importance.

Having finished with the cocoanuts he resumed, as it were, the center of the stage. He thrust out the square forefinger toward the quarter whence the Pigeon of Noah would descend upon them, and then toward the sun to indicate the flight of time. Following which he crossed to the lee beach and stood in the brine. He beckoned to her. He pointed

to himself and to her, and then off across the water, with the motions of one who swims.

The girl stared. For the first time she was utterly at fault. Her intellect refused the evidence of her eyes. By his indication he and she were to swim away together into the thousand miles of ocean. That, however, could not be. He must have some other meaning.

But the savage made plain he did mean just that. He held out his hand toward her invitingly. He waved her—at once an appeal and a command—into the sea.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE TENTH PARADISE, OR——

PALMYRA cowered before Olive. His meaning was plain, all too plain. But his purpose? *There* lay the terror. What, what did he intend?

From that grinning savage, with extended inviting hand, she turned to the sea in frantic question. Could she have overlooked some island, nearby, visible all the while? But the whole circle round the horizon—a straight close line in tortured motion—was unbroken. The desert deep, unknown of man, forgotten by the God that made it.

Her gaze came back to the strange face: the glowing eyes with their spreading color, the lips drawn wide in senseless grin from great square teeth. What hid behind that mask!

Did he mean they, hand in hand, should go down into the sea—and die? Was that to be the form of his revenge superlative? Or, wait . . .

Burke was always talking of the unfearing certitude of the heathen in face of death. Tannese widows demanded to be choked that they might, in the hereafter, go on with their lords. Died smiling. Burke, long among the heathen, was fascinated by this certainty; himself more than half believed.

Did Olive now, sure he could never possess her in life, thus mean to make her his alone in death? Did he, in this hour of transcendent passion, know be-

yond all doubt that out there he and she, through one moment of anguish, should pass on together into his Tenth Paradise—that which is beyond all earthly strife—to an assured eternity of love?

She stared at this being, wide eyed. But if here was ecstasy, frenzy, she saw it not. The savage was as unemotional as a butcher cutting chops.

“I tell you I can’t swim,” she cried out at last. “I can’t swim. Don’t you understand? I can’t swim!”

For the first time his features offered a readable significance. He was perplexed. He fetched his cocoanuts. He sat down before her, indicated that she was the object of the play. He bound two of the dry nuts by their thong of husk to his ankle. Also others, as he showed, about his waist. And then, then she understood.

The cocoa-tree owes its distribution to the buoyancy of the ripe nuts in their husks. From the shoreward palms, leaning out over the tide as if for the purpose, these fall, to be wafted, perhaps, for a thousand miles. Lodging at last, they grow, crowning every rock that rears above tropic surf, till the bosom of Mother Ocean is bejewelled, like some barbaric queen, with a wealth of emerald such as Sheba never knew.

The girl saw that Olive thus was saying “life preserver.” He meant to make her into a sort of raft.

Her agitation diminished. This bespoke life, not death. The fanatic, about to drown one, did not provide a float. Nor, as it occurred to her here, did he so determinedly insist that one eat and drink. These considerations were decidedly reassuring.



But when she turned again to the brute ocean, she recoiled. As it now lunged at the reef, now covered it in a sweep of angry green, she saw that Olive still demanded the impossible.

The savage, with his first manifestation of uneasiness, cast a glance at the sun. For a moment he hesitated; then the grin left his lips. He picked up the four-foot tip of one of the severed leaves. With it he threatened her, as a child, pointing the other hand toward the sea. As his own father—and a thousand fathers before him—he brought the switching leaflets down across her ankles. And as the babes of a thousand generations, she crouched before him, the tears coursing her cheeks, and held out her arms in mute appeal.

But when he would have come to her with the floats, she sprang away again in her panic of the sea.

The brown man shrugged in finality. He could wait no longer. He turned and, without a look back, marched away leeward. He splashed into the water; deep, deeper. In a moment he must swim. But in that moment the girl, with a wail, rushed after, imploring.

Olive, grinning anew, faced about. She saw he had had not the slightest thought of giving her up. He had tricked her emotions. But when he fetched the cocoanuts and clutched her ankle, though she quivered in all her being, she did not resist. For in some way the savage had, by resort to childish punishment, established an ascendancy he could have gained in no other manner. He seemed to have reduced her to a childish helplessness by making her

perceive how absolutely she was, in those great hands, a child.

Nor was this cowardice. It was of those instances, sufficiently rare among the high-spirited, where courage surrenders to reason. A captive thing, she must either be like the zebra that, in blind passion for liberty, batters its head against the stockade unto death, or the elephant which, within the twenty-fourth hour, perceives the impossibility of resistance, accepts the inevitable, begins to follow its new master for whatever rewards docility may afford.

True, David *had* slain Goliath. But she knew only too well that, were she to try, Olive would laugh, and—she would lose her hidden knife. And this she must not risk. For so long as she had it she was safe from him in one dreadful sense; she could escape by turning that point against her own breast.

And, besides, she felt her one chance was now with the brown man. On the island she was helpless and, with both Olive and Ponapé Burke, in their infatuation, hopeless. But Olive's clansmen, could she reach them, might prove dispassionate. Astonishingly, despite their fealty, some among them might be disposed to help.

She was sure at last Olive was not fanatic. His actions spoke all too intelligibly of life. What his plan was, she could not conceive; but he *had* a plan. He had come up out of the sea, he would go down into the sea. In absence of other explanation, she must assume the bird message in some way made possible a rendezvous on the ocean. And he would be swimming out now to meet the canoes.

The savage, at the water's edge, bound her ankles together with four of the nuts, tying them with the strips of husk. Having acquiesced, it came to her she should free herself of her impeding garments. But when she saw Olive was doing her up into a bundle, she realized that her dress made no difference.

With six of the nuts he buoyed her hips and with four her shoulders. With a length of fibre he wound her skirt tight round her knees. Then he fastened his knife, securely but immediately at hand, in the thongs that bound her waist.

For an interval he left her, lying with upturned face, her eyes closed against the glare. He threw into the sea, so it would drift clear or sink, the food and cask of water, the severed leaves, the opened nuts; everything that spoke of his activity. Then, pausing for a last careful inspection, his glance lighted on the pink silk parasol. He examined it thoughtfully, raised it; offered it, with pleased look, to the tug of the wind. Olive had a sail.

He carried her down into the sea. Floating, she held the parasol as he directed. With strong, leisurely movement he assumed the tow.

Thus did they depart into the thousand miles of empty ocean.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THREE WAYS FROM DEATH

THUS did they depart into the thousand miles of empty ocean.

The girl, unused to the tumult of the sea, was horribly afraid. As they rose and fell she kept herself rigid. When a wave would uprear and come racing down upon her, she could not suppress a cry nor the frantic clutch that sank her fingers into the hair or the flesh of her companion. But Olive, always amused, would break her grip, and rescue the parasol to put once more into her hands.

On, on they went; she held by a loop of cord across his breast, enabling him to use both arms.

Her fear of fanaticism, rearoused by her helplessness when he placed that knife so readily in reach, faded away. Gradually, she began to lend herself to the motion of the sea. As from each slashing crest that broke over her she rose triumphant, she grew in confidence. The water was as warm as a bath and the parasol not only served as a sail, but kept the sun from beating down upon her upturned face. Under other circumstances, this being one's own ship might have been a delight.

Olive did not appear hurried, as a fugitive. His effort, though powerful, was slow. She wondered whether this was because he now felt safe from Burke,

or because he had still a long way to go. One could not, even in flight, swim at frantic pace all day.

At long intervals the savage stopped to rest, floating peacefully with his chin hooked over her arm, grinning at her along his squalid nose. He could relax on the water as restfully as she herself on a couch.

She noticed, also, that he seemed to stop now and then with some purpose other than recuperation. He appeared to raise himself up in the water. This was always when they themselves had risen to the top of some wave higher than its fellows. But, oddly enough, not for a long time did she deduce that, despite the smile and the slow stroke, he expected, watched for, pursuit.

Hour after hour, as it seemed, the beat of those bronze arms went on as steadily as the beat of a marine engine. There was a something, if not soothing at least deadening, in this ship-like propulsion. Gradually her mind relaxed in its concentration upon the moment, and returned to Wreck island and the Rainbow and those she might never see again.

Until now she seemed not to have had an instant for them. Her life had been one continuing climax demanding all her powers. But now, bound helpless, her eyes ever and again filled with warm brine, dependent for her next breath upon the skill, the whim of her savage, she was powerless to hinder or to help. She could not act and she refused to think: of the appalling distance back to land, of the green depths awaiting a failure of that splendid strength, of the lurking life which had stirred the sea's surface at

dawn, and made it vital, as she was at last understanding, to have that knife always ready.

Her thought—such the consecration of the newly betrothed—dwelt more on Van Buren Rutger than her parents. Poor old Van!

It was all well enough for John Thurston. Big John. Were it not for her loss, he would be enjoying every moment. She could see him now, out amidst the snowy surf, enthusiastically picking the Rainbow's bones of material for the new craft.

But dear old Van was so essentially a creature of urban life: life cafe-ed, Follied, clubbed; life debonaire, secure in its well-considered routine. Dragged by circumstance from this orbit in which he had been so bright and gay a star, Van must indeed be miserable.

Unexpectedly, Palmyra laughed aloud. She was wishing those two men, so unlike, could see her here. How aghast Van would be. And how John, all too eager to try the thing himself, would envy the might of her savage.

At this laugh, so unlooked for, Olive paused. He turned his brown-stained eyes upon her, inquiringly. His face, so close, snapped back into focus as the only real thing left in the world. Those others were but shadows: beings forever swept away, as Burke had said, by the deluge.

Panic, never far removed, returned with that half-hysterical laugh. The terrors her mind had been fighting off, rushed in upon her like a wave. Since sunrise a lifetime seemed to have passed. Yet she was now surprised, shocked, to find evening at hand. The sun was dropping with sickening speed; the



sudden tropical night would soon be upon them. Her tireless human machine, then, must have been swimming for hours and hours and hours.

Such effort could not go on unendingly. For sometime he had been moving more slowly, stopping more often to rest, rising at shorter intervals to look around. Had he lost his bearings? Or did he now know his friends had failed him with their canoes? Was even his strength giving way, so that they two would be left to float, helpless, doomed, on the night-black waters?

She tried desperately to read those eyes. Surely, if everything was lost, she must find some sign of doubt, of fear. But she could make nothing of that primitive visage. Their flesh was in contact, but their minds asunder as the poles themselves.

The sun, as the evening before, paused at the horizon to send a goodnight beam across the seas. It kissed her cheek as she surmounted a crest. Then the sun, and the day, were gone.

Olive, as she saw with an ever-growing fear, was swimming very slowly now. He paused frequently, raised himself in the water to peer about, seemed to listen.

At last he stopped; gave her, as she thought, a strange look. Startlingly, he reached out and plucked the knife from her girdle.

Her eyes opened in terror. The knife rose, and then—he clamped it between his teeth, slipped out of the cord and, with a few quick strokes, shot away into the twilight.

A wail broke from the girl's lips. Her fears had been realized. His plan miscarrying, he had reached

the limit of his powers. Savage to the heart, he had abandoned her to torture and death that he himself might live.

As she lay there, too numb with long-continued crisis greatly to suffer, it seemed to her that, above the slash and slather of the sea, she caught another sound. But she gave it little heed. All day she had been hearing voices, the burst of surf, the distant boom of Japanese signals—and these had come to naught.

Deprived of that controlling hand, her feet bound, she dared nothing but cling to the parasol. A combing sea broke over her, left her struggling to right herself, gasping for air. And even as she fought for breath, she knew that, in the water, a something was moving—close.

A moment of ashen fear while her mind flashed back to that long fin cutting the morning sea. And then, astonishingly, she saw the moving bulk was Olive!

The brown man had not deserted her.

With a stroke he was at her side again. He closed upon her arm a mighty hand in reassurance. Instantly, within her bosom there blossomed the sweet flower of fellowship hallowed of those that, side by side, struggle and endure, go out together unto danger and prove true.

Olive swam briskly forward with her now. Exulting, she discovered that the sound which had mocked her, this time at last, was no cruel deception. It was the trample of surf upon a reef.

One sharp struggle and those splendid muscles had carried them, buffeted and breathless, through

a cauldron of a cleft in the outer barrier. They came to rest in a shallow of spent surf on the reef between its higher rim and the nearby shore.

For perhaps half an hour they lay in the restless water, watching the land from behind a coral boulder: a barren beach with palms rising back of it in close rank, and no sign of life.

Then, when the cloaking night had fully come, Olive raised her in his arms and carried her in among the shadows of the pandanus growth. He laid her down, then threw himself beside her and sank almost instantly into the stupor of exhaustion.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### INDECISION AN AGONY

AT first Palmyra was aware of nothing beyond the fact that she was once more on land. That was all-sufficing. The island, by reason of her hours in the water, seemed to rise and fall as giddily as the sea itself. But she could cling to a pandanus and feel safe.

How many, many miles had they come? She recollected men had tried to swim the English channel. Was the channel twelve or twenty miles across? Something like that. But it was cold northern water and the swimmers merely European. Olive must have brought her infinitely further.

True, the palms here, as on the other islands, were young or stunted by unfavorable conditions. Such an atoll would be well-nigh invisible to so inexperienced an observer. Very possibly, when Olive invited her into the ocean, it might never have entered his mind that she did not see the point toward which they were to swim. Still, though she now knew him to have rested so often, not in fatigue but in fear of making his landfall under the revealing sun, she could not bring herself to believe the distance had been so trivial.

The island, plainly, was inhabited. Danger of observation had forced Olive to remain in the sea until the light faded, and then—he must know this

place like a book—to land through one of those depressions in the rim of the weather reef by which the water on the reef-table, at the ebbing of the tide, makes its escape.

For two reasons, she thought, he could not have dared the lagoon. Its waters, because of the abundance of fish, would probably be alive with sharks; and its sands, the villages always standing on the lagoon beach, would be alive with men. But here, on the ocean face, he would have it barren, abandoned to the wind and surf, the birds and the spirits of the dead.

This finding an inhabited island so close proved Burke's boast that the natives looked upon his prison islet as bedevilled. For without such a dread it would have been no prison. But with it, she knew, he could have asked no greater security—as witness this not uncommon Micronesian avoidance of the ocean front of its atolls. She wondered if the place had gained its reputation through a sight, from the sea, of that frantic white man, formerly there held, running down to gesticulate wildly at some far-seen canoe.

Palmyra stared at the savage lying beside her. She was conscious of a revulsion. Out on the great ocean, when she was dependent upon him for the next moment of life, there had developed a something more than that childlike sense of need; a glow as almost of good will. But the moment she felt her feet once more on solid ground she had begun to revert to her original loathing.

As she sat, heavy with fatigue, she tried to think what she should do. At first, though her mind raced

on as under the stimulus of a drug, she was physically so numb as to be unaware of externals. She did not feel the salt water that filtered from her hair to drip down the end of her nose. She did not identify the dragging weight of the cocoanuts that hung from her shoulders. But she began at last to be aware she was shivering, her flesh as cold as stone. She made to wring the water from her clothing.

And now, belatedly, her reviving faculties apprized her that she was quite close to the houses of the inhabitants. Through the thicket she could see their little fires, smell the burning cocoanut husks and shells. She must have been seeing these fires all along, but until now they had meant nothing to her.

There might be a dozen houses in the group. Were others hidden by the dark? The island seemed narrow, but then, so were all of them. Even with the largest atolls of the Pacific, almost a hundred miles in circumference, the land enclosing the lagoon was never more than a third of a mile wide. In some the circlet of palms went, continuously, almost around the lagoon. In others the atoll was a string of islets—possibly twenty or thirty of them—rising along the curve of the reef. With this reef in each interval a wash of sparkling foam, the whole, from a high-flown aeroplane, would become a necklace upon the bosom of the Pacific; emeralds set in the filigreed silver of the surf.

The girl wondered whether this might be an outlying cluster of thatches on such an islet, with the metropolis ten or twenty miles away along the reef, or whether there was little more to it than she now saw, a place almost as meager as Wreck island.



She discovered, with a puzzled indignation at her unintelligence, that she had been thinking of the people here as Olive's friends, those perhaps to whom he had sent the bird message. But, in face of his cautious approach, their hiding, that could never be. Why, these were his enemies! Hope sprang up. From her dress she caught the knife and slashed away the fibres which bound her.

She would have tried to run, could she have forgotten how, at the other island, he had awakened. Cautiously she began to work beyond reach of this demon. Her skirt held her and she had to squeeze out some of the weight of water. With every inch gained her courage grew. Finally she brought herself to her feet and, the island pitching and rolling under her like a boat, stood holding to one of the pandanus trunks. A few steps further and she could rush away.

But as she stood there, something of Ponapé Burke's came back into her mind. "Queenie," he had said, "I own these dam' kanakas—body and soul: or did before the Japs cut in. Scare 'em t'death first, then give 'em contraband. At the big settlements there's a bit competition, but these little places. . . . I own 'em: I'm king."

Instantly, sickening doubt. If these people were the enemies of Olive in his rebellion, then they must be the friends of Burke. If Olive hid from them it must be that they, to his purpose, were the same as Burke. The girl swayed, caught herself just in time. What, what should she do? Was it best to stay with the brown beast, or throw herself back into the hands of the white? Was there no alternative?

She sank to the ground. She was very young in years; doubly young in experience. Already the demands of the day had been too many. But sick with fatigue and emotional stress she still must face the issue and—decide her fate.

She temporized. Why not hold until day? She could judge better then, and was there anything to lose? In the morning Olive himself must meet these people, for to remain hidden by daylight was impossible. Then she could make an appeal.

But the savage too completely dominated her. She could not believe he had no definite plan. Daylight would not find him unawares; it would not find him at all unless that best suited his purpose. He knew a way out.

Yes, to delay was to make her fate a certainty. But in those thatches yonder—was there not a chance? At the other island she had chosen between Burke and Olive because Olive was taking her to his clan. And if his people had seemed the lesser evil then, why not Burke's people now? Someone among them might be bold enough to make a stand in her defense, or at least to hide her. Anyway, she would go far enough to look into the houses, and then. . . .

She pulled herself to her feet.

But here the brown savage awoke. One hand reached for her at his side. Then he perceived her, in the filtering gleam of the rising moon, gathering herself for flight. Had she been less numb she could have sprung away. But in the moment of her panic he seized her and stifled the cry that rose, unsummoned, to her lips.

He stood for some time grinning down at her, then

led her back to her place. She could hear a sound of voices from the thatches; they were singing—a solemn chorus. She was as near as that and yet, with the massive hand upon her arm, she was half the world away.

Olive cut down more green cocoanuts to eat and drink. She wondered what he would have done had she succeeded, on the first island, in getting his knife. He seemed dependent on it. Poignantly, in this new perception, she regretted not having made here a second attempt. Had she stolen it and got away before he could demand her own—assuming he knew of that—he might have been left at a fatal disadvantage.

The savage now tapped the ground significantly at her side. She was ordered to lie down and there remain. He turned and slipped away among the trees and, once more, she was left alone.

The girl half arose, then sank back with a gesture of hopelessness. He had not even troubled to tie her. Was he watching behind some tree to trap her if she moved? Or were there so few hiding places he was certain she could not elude him? Or was it that he so little cared whether or no she got to the inhabitants?

With a sob, she lay down. What use longer to struggle? Her belief in the machine-like infallibility of this creature was growing into an obsession.

But the fighting blood of those old sea dogs of whom she had boasted would not let her surrender to that overmastering weariness without one more effort. What if she could manage a secret appeal?

Together, those natives might well fear to aid,

whereas almost any one of them might be glad to do so if none save his intimates knew. As Olive had written, why could not she?

But—what of paper? She paused, confronted by the stonewall of circumstance. No need to cut her hand as the brown man had done, for bright drops of the pirate gore were already available. As she sat, the mosquitoes had been swarming round her. Now and then, automatically, she had thrown out her hand to drive them from her face. In one of these movements her skin had come into contact with the pin point spines on some leaf of the undergrowth. She had the blood but nothing on which to use it.

While she puzzled, she felt reconnoiteringly for the hostile foliage. It proved to be a stiff sword-like leaf that thrust at her from the shadows. Her fingers found the row of thorns along its edge, closed on its smooth fleshy body.

Immediately, as she felt the glossy surface, her mind flashed back to childhood, and a grocer's window in which there had been a holiday squash with the words "Happy New Year," grown into its skin. Astonishingly, the thought came to her now that, as the farmer had scratched those letters upon that growing squash, so might she scratch a message upon this leaf.

She examined it as best she could in the shadow. Then, cutting off something more than a foot of the blade, she began, with apprehensive care, to crawl toward a point a few feet away where she could get the moonlight, tropically intense.

The leaf, she found, was surfaced by a thin trans-

parent film. With a pin she scratched it experimentally. It cut, tearing up white along the mark and leaving the green underskin to show through in a darker color. If she were careful enough, she exulted, she could write, or rather engrave, upon it legibly.

The appeal grew with tragic slowness. The pin work could not be hurried, the condensation of wording took thought. Each moment the moon threatened to fail behind flying rain cloud. By the time she had finished she was frantic with the repeated visualization of a great lace-mitted hand thrusting down from behind.

But, readably, the leaf said:

Help! Abducted by Ponapé Burke, Lupé-a-Noa, from wrecked Yacht Rainbow, 4 days sail. His man Olive now steals me. Whichever gets me—death or worse.

MISS PALMYRA TREE

Boston, U S A

There could be no word to tell anyone where to find her on the morrow, and her only hope of understanding lay in Burke's statement that certain of the older men talked English.

And, now that she had it finished, what should she do with it? Her grinning ogre stood between her and the villagers. Left here among the pandanus trees the leaf would not be found. And if she tried to carry it out, Olive would, she was convinced, pounce upon the message—a risk she could not contemplate.

She must make the leaf noticeable. Nothing else at hand, she drew off one of her wet stockings. She smiled drearily. Silken hosiery where hosiery was unknown. That *should* attract attention.



With the stocking she bound a fragment of coral to the leaf. Then, gazing apprehensively about, she began to crawl forward. She must not try to go far. And at the slightest sound she must drop the missive before Olive could see.

Within five or six yards the cover ended. Beyond in the moonlight lay barren sand, foot trampled, a place in frequent visitation. She would have liked to go further. But the danger was tremendous, the gain uncertain. She paused breathlessly to listen. Then she flung the weighted leaf.

From out there a clink of sound reached back, brazen loud to her straining senses as a gong. It seemed impossible that Olive should not hear; should not spring grinning from the thicket; should not, unerringly as a dog, nose up, snatch that precious message, her only hope.

For an interval she hung on, waiting. Then, in the unexpected silence, body and mind collapsed. She dragged herself back to the waiting place, but she was unaware of it. The sand warmed her, the earth rocked her as in a cradle, but—she was asleep.

For ages she must have lain in torpor. Then, suddenly, she awoke with a cry. She was clasped tight in a pair of great arms; held close against a naked breast. No need for her to see that grinning face. It was the beast!

Desperately she put all her strength into a lunge. So unexpected this effort to get free that success was hers. Surprisingly, indeed, she flung herself quite clear of those arms—and fell, with a strangling gasp, into water that rose above her head.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE EMPTY MILLION MILES

WHEN Palmyra Tree thus flung herself out of the arms of Olive, the brown man had been carrying her again down into the sea. The strong arms rescued her, yet she fought desperately. Ashore, she had been slow to trust those half seen figures about the fires. Having trusted, she could not bear to be snatched away before her appeal had been found.

But the savage, once surprised, was impregnable. With a broad hand over her mouth to still any cry, he waded inexorably in. And now, facing another swim, she realized that she was without her cocoanut floats.

The moon was gone in a downpour of rain. Sky and sea and land had lost form—dissolved. And yet in this melting world something had remained solid, for presently the girl received a smart bump between the shoulders. Twisting, she found an unstable shape that intuition, rather than sight, identified as a canoe.

Olive sat her on the canoe, steadied her there, pointed. His hand seemed to fade into nothingness. He raised her own arm so she could feel the direction. At first, only rain. Then the deeper tone of extending thicket and a low star—that moved, turned into the riding light of a vessel; identified as such, in an elfin glow as from the skylight, by a

white ghost of sail, and a mast. No need for Olive to thrust his face close to hers and make the sign of the scar. It was the pursuing Burke.

At once the girl, so evenly balanced the alternatives of her fate, suffered a right-about of her desire. She had just been struggling to free herself of the brown man, yet now, when she saw that success would have thrown her at once into the hands of the white, she was aghast. For with Burke present his timid creatures ceased to offer any chance; it was again with Olive's clansmen she felt her hope to lie.

*But there was the leaf letter!*

She strove to make Olive understand they must go back. She pointed landward, gesticulated.

It was inevitable he should think she continued in resistance. He took her firmly, laid her prone, made her grip the framework. In that rain they two would surely have eluded Burke, but the leaf must irrevocably set him upon the trail anew. And she could not explain.

With the paddle, strong, noiseless, Olive drove the canoe out into the world of waters. Briefly the black blot of the land remained. Then Noah's own deluge seemed actually to have intervened to drown out all that Palmyra Tree had ever known.

The rain hammered the sea until spray rose like dust from a pulverized surface. Yet, though the water under them apparently had been beaten so flat that the canoe scarcely lifted, the girl's ears were still filled with a rush and tumult of waves. Lying, not in the canoe itself but seemingly outside on a frail platform of sticks, she clung, bracing herself against that threatening inrush. Not for some

time did she guess they were thus enchantedly becalmed because they traversed, rather than the open sea, the lagoon.

Relieved of her apprehension, she began to patch together the incidents of their flight, into a revealing film. When the wind had revived to let Ponapé Burke beat back to the first island in pursuit of Olive—(could it really be little more than twenty-four hours since the white man imprisoned her there?)—he found the place abandoned. He had also found her supplies gone, a thing implying a boat, and Olive's forgery of a boat's imprint on the sand, a counterfeit softened into greater verisimilitude by the placid tide.

Burke must either detect the fraud, or believe some vessel, almost certainly the Japanese gunboat, had sighted her distress signals. In that event, he was free to assume Olive had drowned in his effort to reach land, had arrived too late and then swum away, or had been taken off with the girl, presumably against his will.

If Burke had not been fooled, his problem was simple unless other islands lay within swimming distance. The very presence of this one assumed others. But conditions of wind or current might have limited Olive, or made this the probable landing. At any rate, Burke was here.

The white man could have visited other islands, or cruised about for the pair in the water. Or he might have believed sufficiently in a vessel to try to overhaul it, despite the danger, on the chance it would not be the Jap, but some merchant craft small enough to attack.

Failing elsewhere, he had had, as evening approached, to anchor in this lagoon, assuming that she was either beyond his reach forever or must swim directly into his hands. When Olive delayed their arrival the brown man had, she deduced, wanted to remain in the water until Burke had made whatever search he intended and had questioned the natives. Thus these could answer sincerely and convincingly that they had seen no fugitives.

How, the island on the alert, Olive could get her ashore and away again unseen, a canoe under them, she could not think. The rain would have helped. But his every action made clear that the craft had not been given him. Evidently, day must disclose the loss, begin the chase.

Why had he deliberately sacrificed so much? Had something gone wrong, to leave no other way? But it really made no difference. The cleverest strategy would, by her leaf letter, have been brought to naught.

At reference to that appeal, she suffered over what seemed inexplicable vacillation. One moment she had been afraid of those natives ashore, the next she would have rushed to them. In one breath, she saw herself imploring heaven for a chance to get back to Burke, with the next frantically trying to warn Olive of the letter that would have taken her back.

Until now Palmyra had never thought of herself as notional, unable to make up her mind. It had not occurred to her to question her course as between John Thurston and Van Buren Rutger. But now, in the light of this present indecision, she began to wonder whether she might not have been weak.

In dilemmas strikingly variant had not her conduct formed a damaging parallel?

Her self-contempt was uncompromising. It took no account of the sheltered manner of her life; of the fact that, before John and Van, and Ponapé and Olive, her most important question might well have concerned itself with Shakespeare and Florenz Ziegfeld. At nineteen she demanded of herself everything adult, whereas at thirty-nine she would look back and wonder that she could have been so mature.

At another time the girl would have been angered with the brown man for treating her as a child. But now she felt he was justified. She was, indeed, rather admiring him for so unerringly recognizing her limitations, so unhesitatingly handling her as she deserved.

Already the odd comradeship of the sea was reasserting itself.

Could this creature, by strange intervention of providence, be an agency of good, hurrying her before the demon Burke, ever on toward some port of rescue? Or was it that he but carried her, for himself alone, further and further into the fastnesses of the uncharted seas?

It was this kindness, obscure flower of her dependency upon him in the alien element of ocean, which made her consider the first, fantastical though it was. She wanted to endow him with some motive other than that black animal passion for her possession. Could he, say, have taken her from Burke to hold for ransom? or to return, safe and sound to civilization, for a golden reward?



But, alas—to so face cruel fatigue, death—one must have a great incentive. And love of gold could not be such among these South Sea islanders. Here alike was no knowledge of necessity and no reward of ambition. Nature, on the one hand, gave freely and, on the other, the tribe, under the patriarchal system, took from the worker the profits of his industry. Olive would not have known what to do with a pile of yellow gold, nor would he have been allowed to keep it.

Her hope faded before a vision of Ponapé Burke, frantically enraged, the deadly pistols in his hands; despoiled, at the height of his infatuation, of the one being he wanted more than he had ever wanted anything in life. None but the strongest of feeling could have nerved the savage to so desperate an act: an infatuation as overmastering as that of Burke himself.

No, all too clearly, every stroke of that paddle swept her more helplessly into the gigantic labyrinth of the Japanese mandate.

With wide frightened eyes she looked through the deluge into a void. Scattering between points as far apart as New York and San Francisco, and Lake Superior and the Gulf, she saw more than a thousand islands, and among the thousand she knew of but five where she was sure of rescue.

Of these—as she had learned from the Rainbow's library—Saipan and Truk and Ponapé were impossibly far. And even Wotje, the intended new Japanese base in the Marshalls, must be almost four hundred miles away; Wotje with—as she believed—a wireless that could instantly have warned Wash-



ington or Paris of a lost girl but, oddly enough, was powerless to aid her here in this coral maze at its own backdoor.

That left Jaluit as her one chance.

Of the natives she knew only that the men of the Marshalls had originally been dangerous; that parts of the mandate—the mid-Carolines, perhaps?—were still almost unvisited; that somewhere lost amid the thousand islands were two with the stations of the Micronesian mission.

How far the influence of these American Congregationalists had spread she did not know, but with only two centers it seemed fair to her to assume that much of the mandate had remained dark as Ponapé Burke's own Tanna. And even these two might now be gone, for the Japanese would naturally supercede their work.

With wide frightened eyes she looked ahead, knowing that within thinkable distance there could be no more than a hundred Japs and fourteen lonesome whites; that, indeed, in the whole mandate there were just *ten white women*.

This last brought home her utter isolation. In an area half as large as the United States there were but ten pairs of motherly arms into which a girl could throw herself for sympathy and understanding.

With strong noiseless strokes of the paddle, Olive, the brown savage, swept her on into this void. And now Palmyra did a strange thing.

She offered to help with the second paddle.

## CHAPTER XXX

### TWO IN A CANOE

THE girl must have slept.

Olive had refused her offer—and now she was surprised to find the rain ended, the sail set and the canoe jumping giddily in the turmoil of outer ocean.

As she clung to her reeling perch, the moonlight would have shown her every detail of the fairy coast they skirted, but her gaze was fixed in fear upon this crazy contraption of sticks and string on which her life now depended.

Never, until it was here revealed in all its frailty, would she have thought anyone could trust to such a craft. Certainly the hull of the canoe proper could be no more than nine feet in length, slightly less than a foot in width. Its sides were so low that every moment threatened disaster. In place of the sturdy planking, the keel and ribs to which she was accustomed, the hull was built up of pieces of the warm-toned wood of the breadfruit tree, dubbed to shape and laced together through eyelets along their edges. And these cocoanut fibre lashings, as day would show, had not a nail to reinforce them, and the joints were calked with nothing more substantial than breadfruit gum.

This hull was on the lee side of the machine. On the weather side was that characteristic feature of Pacific island boat building, the outrigger; a device

that kept the narrow body upright. Here a slight, sharp pointed piece of timber, perhaps two feet shorter than the hull, floated parallel to it and about five feet distant. The outrigger, with what seemed a reckless inadequacy, was only fastened by its central part to the canoe, where two slender poles of mangrove curved up to be lashed athwart the top of the hull amidships.

In most of the Pacific islands the device serves only to stabilize the narrow craft. But the Marshall island canoes are true catamarans in that it helps carry the burden. Hence Palmyra's little square platform, almost too small for herself and the drinking cocoanuts, extended from the lee edge of the hull across and almost half way to the outrigger, resting on its poles.

The rig of this craft was equally strange. The ten-foot mast, in place of being stepped on the keel line as in any other boat, rested on the gunwale of the platform side. It raked both forward and to lee, leaning on three sennit ropes from the outrigger. As for the sail, it was right forward, its sides fastened to two light poles as long as the mast, to form a "V" perhaps seven feet across the top. Of the two poles, secured with the foot of the sail in the nose of the canoe, one slanted aft to work against the top of the mast, and the other swung free, a boom from which the sheet ran to Olive in the stern with the steering paddle.

Palmyra could not imagine how the craft went about in tacking, for such a rig required the outrigger always to windward, where its weight and the load on the platform could offset the pull of the sail

Only later did she discover the method. Then Olive simply loosened the "V" from the nose of the canoe, carried it aft, the mast sustaining its weight, and fastened it in what had been the stern. The mast swung round to a corresponding angle and the craft, double-ended like a whale boat or a birch-bark canoe, was away again, other prow forward.

The girl, crouched on her railless roost, catastrophe seemingly at hand, had not the sustaining knowledge that these Marshall island canoes, the best in the Pacific, are astonishingly seaworthy. But she was otherwise sustained in a prideful determination that this savage should not see how afraid she really was.

Though the sail was drawing full, he continued steadily to aid their pace with the steering paddle. Palmyra did not know whether, when she had offered to help, he had feared the blade in her unaccustomed hands would make a noise, or that she might fall overboard or capsize the canoe. Now, however, though the girl felt their spidery craft must go over or under at the very next surge, she raised herself with painful caution and, defiantly, reached for the scorned paddle.

Olive made no comment. Presently Palmyra risked a look back and found his face masked by that grin which was so hateful when one would have read his thoughts. Was he assuming she, by her act, had declared herself a partisan?

As she dipped her paddle experimentally, the moon seemed engaged with the sea in a game of wits as to whether the shore the canoe skirted should remain real, a thing of coral and glistening palm

feathers, or should float away into the ethereal. Now, when the surf sank into a sleepy monotone, the moon would appear to have spirited the island all but away. And then the sea would awake to the danger and rush after, to burst into angry uproar upon a reef still reassuringly substantial. But the moon in the end triumphed; as when the nearer land dissolved by magic to reveal a further shore, distant, enchanting as a mirage; or again, when both sides of the atoll intermitted for an instant, and the moon flashed a triumphant beam right through, as if island and lagoon, of some vision fabric, had been sundered by one pass of a silver wand.

The luminary had long since lured its island completely away, when the eastern sky began to color with the dawn. For a time the leaden bulk of the morning bank lay across the horizon, impenetrable. Then its upper surfaces warmed, flushed into a glow and, unexpectedly, here was the sun.

Palmyra had ceased hours before to paddle, but Olive, gray with fatigue, was still at it. Now, however, he desisted and opened cocoanuts for them to drink and eat. Then—the tradewind moderate, and steady as the breeze from an electric fan—he sank into a stupor, working the canoe by a sort of instinct that seemed little, if any, to interfere with his recuperation.

To the girl's troubled gaze the drowsing savage, bulky, bronze, motionless, had reassumed his Buddha aspect, smiling the same smile alike on human anguish and on human joy.

Why had she helped him?

Had it been a mere physical effort to ward off



seasickness? to keep her eyes from those menacing seas, her mind from the future?

The prisoner, she had still aided the flight; had found—yes, found a sort of elation in its success. Yet even now, despite that elation, she was not sure she desired success. Reason told her every fathom took her further from the white world she had known. But a something—instinct?—here on the water, at least, was making her one with her captor.

Was she the victim of that strange fellowship which, in many armies, has led the drafted alien to fight bravely, almost willingly, against the people of his own blood?

Or was it that the savage who had carried her here in this life and death struggle for her bodily possession was, at least, preferable to the vile Burke in that the savage knew no better?

Or—was it *Jaluit*?

She had no knowledge where Jaluit lay, or how far. But it *was* within reach; her only hope. As the former German base, there must yet be four or five white men and a dozen or so of Japs; and if this one of the two American mission centers was closed, still native Christians.

She so wanted to go to Jaluit that she could not fail to endow this savage with the grace of taking her there. Absurd though the idea, it gripped her till she could not, for the moment, but believe it true.

After all, though, what could it serve? She tried to rise for a view astern, but dared not stand. She saw no sail, yet knew her letter, the canoe theft, had made a chase certain. Their flying start would save



them from other canoes but not from the swift Pigeon of Noah.

Now and then her companion himself would rouse to stand with ease on the jumping canoe and scan the sea for an enemy.

In one of these wakeful intervals she made, interrogatively, the sign of the scar which had come, in their conversations, to signify the white man. Passing at once from his Buddha-like repose into the animation of discourse, Olive pointed to the sun and then to a spot considerably further on in its line of march. Pursuit, it seemed, must be expected, but not as yet.

Now followed a long pantomime, at times unintelligible. The brown man, in his explanation, was hampered by the limit of action possible in a canoe. His story included himself and Burke, the island, the knife, what seemed to be a gun, the canoe, the Pigeon of Noah. Much of it, as it came, was meaningless because she did not grasp other parts upon which the meaning depended.

There was a point which baffled her, where Olive went through the motions of binding hands and feet, and forced something, crosswise, into his mouth. At first she thought he himself had been tied and gagged, then that it must have been Burke. But long afterwards, when the savage had again sunk into stupor, the explanation flashed into her mind. She could now reconstruct the scene ashore, in part from what Olive had made clear, in part from what her intelligence told her must have occurred.

Ponapé Burke, then, had felt that, if they had not been rescued by some vessel, they must have a

canoe. And to make sure they should not get one in the dark hours, he had had all the canoes on the island brought together and had set over these a guard of two men with rifles, himself waiting near.

Olive, she surmised, had expected secretly to obtain a canoe from a friend and so sail without destroying Burke's possible belief in the fictitious ship. But the brown man, to his dismay, had found this impossible. As daylight must not discover them ashore, he had had no alternative save to take a canoe by force.

Under cover of the rain he had somehow managed a surprise, had bound the guards and got away without an alarm. He had hoped to prevent the chase thus made certain, by cutting rigging on the schooner; but, for some reason, had had to desist with little more than an hour or so of delay ensured.

One detail of Olive's pantomime explained perhaps why Burke had trusted the canoes to any guard but his own. He was drinking heavily. This was good in that, drunken, he would be handicapped in following after. But it was bad, doubly bad, in that, to his own brute nature had been added the brutality of intoxication.

The girl dwelt on this fact in growing fear.

And so it was she responded with a cry when Olive, at last, clicking his tongue in chagrin, pointed astern.

No need for her eyes to seek out a tiny something against the sky to know that the Lupé-a-Noa was come.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A SCAR AND A SCARE

INTENTLY Palmyra sought the menacing speck on the horizon that was the topsail of the *Lupé-a-Noa*; a speck visible only for an instant, then gone for long minutes.

She would have snatched her parasol to raise as an additional sail, but now, to her astonishment, she found that Olive was not making sail, but taking it in. Dismayed, she watched while he unstepped the mast, lashed it with its gear on the canoe, forward of the cross-pieces. A wail of protest broke from her lips. Did he mean thus tamely to surrender?

The brown man picked up the paddle, began to use it. She could make little at any time from the expression of his face. If this was surrender, she found nothing of it; his grin was cheerful as ever.

For an interval she did not understand his efforts with the paddle; directionless, spasmodic. Then, at last, she saw he was maneuvering to keep the canoe, as much as possible, from shooting up on the crest of some wave.

Slowly the speck that was the Pigeon of Noah grew larger. One hardly believed so small a thing could threaten so much of evil. Yet, with every moment, it was rising in the sea, overhauling them; and the girl's cheeks blanched. Already, she vis-

ioned Ponapé Burke there on the crosstrees, leering down at her in evil triumph.

She turned away, covered her face with her hands. She could not bear to watch.

She understood now why Olive had not tried to run. Without knowing that their canoe could have gone closer into the wind than a white man's boat, was faster on any tack than the best the ships carried—was indeed, one of the swiftest types of its size in the world—she assumed correctly that it was no match for the schooner. Their hope depended, not on flight, but in lying unobserved.

Palmyra crouched on her platform. She tried to watch progress of the chase mirrored on the face of the savage to whom discovery meant death. For a time that face grinned meaninglessly. Then she thought it tinged with a note of elation. She pulled herself up to strain once more at the schooner and, presently, even to her unpracticed eye, it became evident that the enemy was making too much southing, must eventually pass them far a-port.

As the topmasts had risen ever higher against the sky, so now they receded—and were gone.

In this game the canoe had had the advantage. Its shorter mast, she judged—still more its hull—could be picked up only after the topsails of the Pigeon were well in sight. Olive would know just how far these could lift before his danger began, and his eyes would be more than a match for Burke's binoculars.

In getting under way again when the schooner had vanished, the brown man once more surprised the girl. In place of sailing wide, he altered his course

so as to make directly after the other vessel. It was as if the canoe pursued the retreating *Lupé-a-Noa*. Only by much puzzling did Palmyra deduce that Ponapé, in his search, would work back and forth across the possible line of their flight, and that the last place he would look for them was in the wake of his own passage.

Olive also succeeded in suggesting another favorable possibility. He pointed after the schooner, made the sign of the scar and shook his head vigorously; then, between thumb and fingers, pressed up the brown flesh of his own arm, and looked at the girl significantly.

She saw he meant, not the white man, but the brown of the crew. Then by pointing, pretending to climb the mast, shading his eyes to peer afar, he finally made her understand he referred to the Pigeon's lookout. Patient pantomime, several times repeated, and she perceived that if Burke trusted to a native seaman aloft—whether one or all, was not clear—that seaman might, if chance afforded, ignore Olive's presence.

To her this seemed a possibility, in view of Burke's harsh way. Also, Olive's prestige must have been greatly increased, and Ponapé's decreased, by Olive's achievement.

But Burke might stay aloft himself.

She hoped he would still be drinking too heavily. It seemed odd that, when he carried gin for the natives, those liqueurs from the *Rainbow* should have set him going. At first it could have been curiosity: to sip those aristocratic beverages. Or chagrin at her unresponsiveness might have had

something to do with it at the start, and rage and grief now.

At any rate there was, it appeared, a fighting chance. She noted, without surprise, how thoroughly—at least while they were on the water—she had allied herself with the brown man as against the white.

Once more the topmasts of the Pigeon of Noah rose from the ocean, phantom distant. Once more they came bearing down—close, close, closer; this time so near that the girl's heart seemed to stop as the canoe wallowed, grovelling, mastless in the troughs of the sea. And then, again, the sails passed and went flitting away.

For the second time the canoe had escaped. In triumph Palmyra could have grasped those square brown hands for their skill in keeping the catamaran from leaping up to the top of some sea and into the range of vision—a skill she was only now recognizing.

The crisis ended, she began to be aware that the unestablished tradewind must again, for some time, have been failing. It was dreadful to think of these two craft becalmed so close. But all present danger would be over.

With this assurance came reaction. Fatigue rushed in. Hour after hour, with tense muscles, she had been meeting that ever changing pitch and plunge, fearing almost to move, thinking a thousand times that the canoe must capsize. To sit was torture; to lie was little better, where one must curl up in peril, waking or asleep, of rolling into the sea.

Yet she could only feel contempt for her own endurance, when she thought of this man. Swim-



ming many hours to her island, he had, with but a short rest, towed her through the water for many hours more; had then, after another brief interval, pulled all through the night, sailed the canoe until the breeze fell, and was now at the paddle again. What of him? Was he adamant?

She looked at that great square torso, those tremendous arms, the strange face. Upon his countenance was none of the grim determination of the Caucasian in mortal stress. It neither lighted with hope nor paled with fear. It only grinned and grinned.

Much as she might mistrust his motive, she could only admire his powers, his courage. In all her life she had known but one other such—John Thurston. In John's own battles he would be the same; calm and competent in extremity; an iron will driving a splendid body on until it had given its last ounce of strength and—had achieved.

But, even while she was bestowing this recognition of the brown man's quality, physical collapse was carrying her backward into an earlier mood. Soon she was able to look at him again, clear eyed, for what he was—her abductor.

With sodden curiosity she in turn considered her recent complacency, so out of all reason; this child-like habit of dependence, this grudged but growing respect. And as regarded Jaluit, she asked herself why, if she believed him taking her there, she had not tried to put the question. And the only answer she found was that she dared not risk the destruction of her last hope.

Might not her fate, after all, be a shade less terrible if the *Lupé-a-Noa* did overhaul them?

For several hours after the failure of the wind, Olive continued to paddle, the canoe thus again having the advantage of the schooner. Then, in the thin dark of the early night, he exchanged places with the girl. He succeeded in making her understand she was to waken him when a certain flaming star had sunk to the horizon. Next, lying partly on the platform and partly in the canoe, he was asleep.

With the falling of the wind the seas had been losing form and had now so far approximated the rise and dimple of the swell that the canoe could bob about without a paddle in control. The air once more was as still and warmed as that of a winter house. To the girl's drugged senses all was unreal; as if, the earth left behind, they had paddled straight away among the stars. For, from above, the low-drawn firmament, ablaze, touched the sea line, only to be repeated, beneath and apparently as far below, by the reflected multitude of blazing points.

When Palmyra waked the savage obediently at the designated hour her earlier feeling had faded. Indeed, his respite had been so pitifully short as to have aroused her womanly compassion, even against her will.

She was thinking that his infatuation must be great indeed for him to so risk and endure; or that his vanity must be insatiable in its life-long protest against the stigma of effeminacy; a struggle now to end in triumph with this crowning achievement of a matchless valor: the unaided theft of Burke's own woman from Burke's own hands. And she found

herself wondering which the governing force—vanity or infatuation.

She tried at first to help with the paddle. But endurance could go no further, and she fell into sleep. All through the now moon-lighted night, however, she was aware, in her uneasy slumber, of the rhythmical beat of his paddle as, before each stroke, he rapped its handle down across the gunwale in consonance with his song. He was doggedly driving the prow athwart the way of their sailing, so as to get as far as possible off the course Burke would accept as probable for them.

Dawn of the second day began to kindle with their craft lifting crazily on the oily sea. More cocoanut: the water and ship's biscuit abandoned ages ago on that first islet seemed in retrospect a sumptuous fare. Then the wind sprang up again and once more they were away. But so cramped and weary her body now that she took little heed. She wanted, more than she wanted life itself, to be free of that torturing machine; to relax, to walk, to lie in peace.

The enemy was nowhere in sight. Palmyra felt that each fathom gained made pursuit more difficult because of the greater breadth of course Burke must patrol. But if fear of him was lessening a little with every hour, a new fear was taking its place; growing every minute more intense. How could this savage say where they were on the empty ocean?

He had presumably known the location of the island whence he had fetched her. He was familiar with the second. But since that they had travelled two whole nights and a day out of sight of land.

Without a compass, he had still, by the chase, been

forced to change his course. When the wind failed, he had paddled athwart his sailing direction. And when the Pigeon of Noah was in sight he had maneuvered toward every point of the card. Yet now he sailed on and on.

Was he flying thus into an unknown sea?

Stealthily, with an ever increasing apprehension, she watched his face. But she saw nothing of uncertainty in his eyes; not one glance did he cast to starboard or to port. His hand on the paddle never faltered. With the placidity of a man in his own home street, he flew on across the trackless ocean.

But he had faced death from his white master with the same placidity. Always it had been thus when life itself hung by a thread: she could never read one sign of doubt, of strain, of fear. For this being, indeed, was an inveterate gambler against Fate. Death was his familiar antagonist. And some day Death must win.

That the savage now sailed on, serene, gave not the slightest proof he knew anything of this wilderness of waters. Rather, she felt, in this greatest of all gambles, he would deliberately push on into the desert sea on the mere hope that some oasis of palms might rise into sight before the forfeit of the last anguished moment.

Palmyra Tree watched, and her fear grew.

The brown man sailed on into the unknown. And—there were just four drinking nuts in the canoe. A score of times the girl counted them, and her lips were parched.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### EYES OF THE SEA

It was now, in this last twelve hours, that Palmyra had seen Olive for the first time handle a curious kite-frame affair of sticks, decked out with small yellow cowry shells. This frame she had noticed at her original inspection of the canoe, and since, when she was not too tired, too frightened, too miserable to think at all, she had wondered what it could be.

Where everything else appeared to have a practical use, this seemed in no place to apply. Yet it was still an object of the brown man's special care. By the process of elimination, she concluded it could only be some sort of fetish; a religious symbol that controlled their destiny.

In these hours now, as they flew further and further into the untravelled ocean, she saw he held this frame more and more in his hands and gave it earnest consideration.

There were, as she counted, thirty-six sticks and twenty-six shells. These slender rods, all in one plane, were tied together at their intersections with sennit. The shells were strewn upon them seemingly without plan. The form was pentagonal with a triple border, the sticks along each face parallel and about two inches apart. At the lower right-hand corner and the upper left, triangles stuck out like bay-windows. Across the middle of the frame two sticks formed a



letter "X" and a third, curving, drew a semi-circle to the right of their intersection. Athwart the frame towards its bottom, two bent pieces formed an ellipse which, with its six short cross sticks, reminded the girl of the plan of a whaleboat.

As she watched the savage in contemplation of this fetish, Palmyra's apprehension grew. She had been able to make nothing of his face, but here was illumination. When they were within touch of land he had not turned to the frame. But now, clearly knowing little or nothing as to what lay ahead, he prayed these futile sticks and shells to bring him safe ashore.

For a long time she did not ask. If this object were a heathen symbol he might resent curiosity about it; to talk of it, especially to a woman, might be taboo. But finally she could restrain herself no longer; pointed to the frame questioningly.

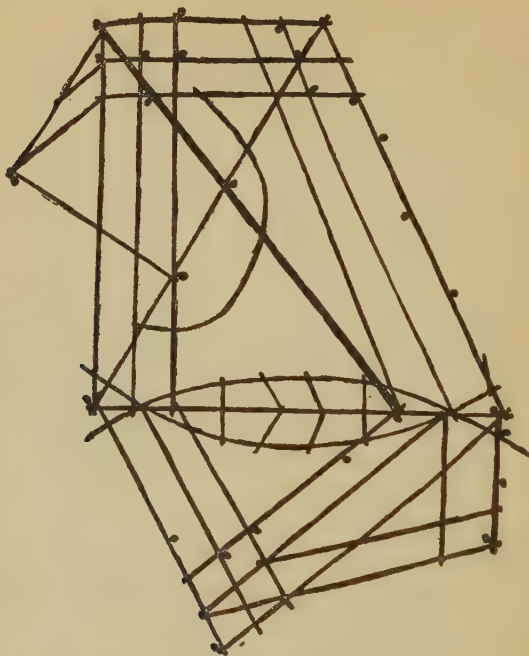
Olive's grin broadened. He was not annoyed, but she sensed a touch of surprise. Perhaps he had supposed the affair also a commonplace of her own life. That was one of the things which made the situation so difficult; they had no word, no experience, even no article of daily use in common.

This contrivance then which she had endowed with so much of mystery proved to be nothing more than the brown man's chart. Yet, even at that, it was still a mystery. Among the islanders it was forbidden except to the hereditary navigators, and among white men few had ever grasped its application; none, perhaps, had ever been able to read upon the ocean's surface its guides and warnings.

With such a frame of sticks, however, Olive, could



he have made it plain to her, sailed from lagoon to lagoon across the trackless ocean in almost the assurance of a civilized mariner with chart, compass and sextant.



OLIVE'S CHART

Where the ocean combs through such a group of atolls as the Marshalls, the surface movement is impeded and modified. When, for instance, the sea, on-driven by the wind, approaches the weather side of an island, the water is piled up; the swells ahead are slowed in their advance, those behind trample upon their heels. The whole visible fabric is bent backward into a bow.

In the same way, on the lee side of each island, the surface movement is modified by the relief of the water from the push of a thousand miles of seas. To the north and the south similar effects are produced. And, in addition, the ocean, pouring past each island, creates sets of diagonal markings. It is where these indications cross and those from separate islands meet that the hereditary navigator finds his sea graphic with signposts and danger signals.

On such a chart as Olive's, the shells represent the islands, the sticks the *dunung*, or water modifications. It makes plain the direction of the principal *dunung* swells, the course of these in their contact with the islands, and the crossings of the *dunung*, which furnish the principal guides for navigation. The islands are not located geographically, but spaced according to elapsed time.

With but a vague idea of the relative bearing of a lagoon, the sailor would still set confidently forth and, as an Indian on the trail, pick his way from wave to wave until the palm feathers rose safely above the sea.

Thus, it is authenticated of the navigator Larjojok that, once between the lagoons of Ebon and Namorik, only about eighty nautical miles apart, he was still, by reason of bad weather, eight days out of sight of land. Yet, despite the equatorial current, running more than forty miles a day, he was not lost, but each time caught the danger *dunung* before he had been swept into the stark outer ocean of destruction, and set his course back to the line that brought his flotilla safe at last to port. For such an achievement,

one need be no sailorman to realize the extraordinary talent of observation, of mental and physical discipline required.

Only so much of this could Olive make plain to the girl that she knew he laid his course by the surface manifestations of the sea. He pointed to an intersection of the sticks—the canoe's present position. He looked out at the water to port, grimaced disapprovingly and shook his head. He looked to starboard, grinned approvingly. He signified the water as it washed against the canoe: the one side was bad, the other good. The whole face of the ocean, she perceived, its every furrowed frown and dimpling smile, was alive for him with meaning. But follow as she would his pointing finger, she could distinguish nothing.

Too greatly was Olive handicapped by his lack of speech. Enough she got to marvel; even though she could not guess that, had the savage explained in fluent English and she followed with all the nautical knowledge of an admiral, she would still have been unable to read, in all but two or three cases even to see, these signposts with which old Neptune has so plainly marked the way for his own men of the atolls.

Palmyra would have been impressed again had she known that, in a group where the secret has been jealously guarded for the exaltation of the chiefs, Olive, an alien, had yet mastered it at a day when the younger Marshall rulers were finding it too difficult and the old had often forgotten.

Obtaining the chart, clandestinely, on that first island where he had seized the canoe, he had had its private symbols explained by the friend who

made it; was now attempting a voyage such as the Marshallese themselves seldom, if ever, repeat in this decadent age when foreign control has ended the making of wars and the levying of tribute.

One thing was in Olive's favor. In this latitude the trade wind begins its season about the middle of November and continues through into March, blowing with gradually increasing strength until it reaches its maximum in January. While much of Micronesia lies in the doldrums and light airs are the rule, the trade wind still becomes lusty enough to obliterate *dunung* indications; leaves, in fact, visible through the entire year, only the two strongest *dunung* in the group: the *rilib*, that from the east, and the *bungdockerik*, that from the south.

But the trade wind season having just recently begun, the warnings were still readable. And the savage, in addition, possessed the old Caroline island art of navigation by the stars, so that he had the one method by night to check against the other by day.

As they flew through the water, Olive would lie first on the starboard until one *dunung* became much the stronger as it washed against the side of the canoe. Then he would turn and lie on the port bow until the other *dunung* became the stronger.

Eventually the brown man, with a seeming elation, called her attention to a manifestation of the sea forward. It was, as he could not explain, a nodule or knot where the water is thrown up by the crossing of the *dunung* diverted by an island. The navigator, having picked up the first of these so-called *boots*, advances from one to another along the *okar*, or

root; thus termed because, as a man following the root of the palm comes to the tree, so one following the *okar* comes to the island.

In despair of making this significance clear, Olive at length indicated a little accumulation of sand in an angle of the canoe. The girl, however, had already grasped, from his evident self-satisfaction, that land lay ahead. She was wondering whether the people of this island would turn out to be *her* friends, or merely the friends of her captor, or of the man who followed.

But, bodily fatigue too imperative for other considerations, she was waiting anxiously when, at last, Olive pointing, she made out the plume of palm. With a joyful cry she sprang up in her eagerness. A warning, and she clutched the mast just in time to avoid going overboard or capsizing the canoe.

She had assumed that, of course, she was soon to be relieved of this rack of torture. Yet, finally, she made the unbelievable discovery that he was not negotiating the lagoon, but slipping by far at sea. She held out her hands appealingly. She besought him to take her ashore. But the savage, grinning callously, kept the canoe to its course.

Tears welled into her eyes and ran down her cheeks, yet he was as granite. Oh, her aching body! Sight of this isle, tantalizing, unattainable, had made her frantic.

That night, however, she awoke to find herself, again, encircled by those great arms, held close against that copper breast. But no struggle now. It was land, land—thank God, land!



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### PALMYRA REBELS

OH, what joy once more to stand, to walk, to run; to throw oneself at full length upon the soft warm earth and relax to the last muscle. It was Heaven itself.

For a long time she was deaf, blind to anything beyond. And then, with a shock, she became aware the savage was gathering more drinking nuts. She was not yet free of that *torturing canoe!*

But in this realization the unbearable fact seemed, curiously enough, not that the voyage must be resumed, but that she could have no swallow of water.

She ran to him, tried, with all the intensity of one in fever, to make him understand. She dipped into a hole with her cupped hands, held them to her lips.

He watched her attentively, but in the end shook his head. She did not know whether he had failed to comprehend, was afraid to try, or merely too brutal to gratify her yearning.

The girl began to sob. In her fatigue her emotions had become unbearable as a child's. But, presently, she was appeased when the brown man signified that he would be away among the palms, for she thought he had relented.

Back and forth, back and forth she walked, almost ran. Then she flung herself down flat again in the



luxury of complete relaxation. But the deep sleep that would have closed in upon her, she fought away, for she must think.

Was the island inhabited? She had seen no sign, and Olive appeared at ease. But, then, this was the ocean side of the atoll at night, abandoned to the ghosts. Anyone who saw her would think her a disembodied spirit. She shuddered. Was she now in truth more than the shadow of that girl who once had lived?

But if the island really were uninhabited, and she ran away? Either Olive would track her down, or she would starve. A sentence she had heard in Honolulu came vividly back. "And here," the narrator had concluded, "I was cast on an island where the veriest idiot of a native could have lived like a prince, yet so helpless and ignorant was I that I nearly died."

Or, if the island were inhabited, could these still be Burke's people? After all this cruel sailing that scarcely seemed believable. Yet her sufferings might have magnified the distance, with Burke continuing close at hand.

Or, again, when the man-o'-war hawk flashed away into these mysterious and awful fastnesses, had this been its destination? Was Olive even now in consultation with his friends?

At the one remaining possibility she recoiled: these unseen natives, hostile to all, might be ferocious wild men among whom she would fare far worse than now.

She stretched her body out to the uttermost. Olive at least, though her abductor, had treated her

with consideration. And—she smiled drearily—if she fled she would lose that deep draft of sweet cold water he had gone to fetch.

As she lay there she reproached herself with being a descendant of Esau. But a moment later she was wondering whether, were she a brown woman, one of Olive's own race, she would already have begun, secretly, to admire him.

Her recent more kindly feeling toward this man had its basis in the fact that, in some curious way, he was now continually reminding her of John Thurston. Since her first recognition of this, she had surprised herself in moments when she had had an odd sense of the savage as a familiar.

Never once had she likened him to Van. Here was an utter difference. They touched at no one point on the circumference of being. But, absurd though it might seem, there was much in common between the highly civilized John and the naked Olive. In separate worlds they were very much of a parallel character, ability, achievement. Both so strong and big, they possessed alike that power she had never heretofore considered or learned to value—the power to do. How different might this struggle have been, were the opponents, not Burke and Olive, but Olive and Thurston.

And now, just as on that other island, the savage returned before she had made up her mind. But at sight of him here she roused eagerly. She had not definitely willed to barter her birthright for one drink of water, but she was famished for the water. The sweet-acid juice of those green nuts revolted her to nausea.

Yes, he had something in his hands. He really *was* kind. She sprang up, ran to meet him. And then a bitter cry—bereavement, outrage. She had asked for water and he had brought her—*bananas!*

At another time bananas would have been as manna. The Marshalls are unusually productive for atolls. In addition to the cocoanut and pandanus and occasional coarse taro, all one could hope, say, in the Gilberts, here was breadfruit in some quantity and, at the most fertile points, even a limited supply of the fruit now offered. Yet, as the taro and breadfruit were useless uncooked, the pandanus seemed little better than chewed toothpick. and the two fish Olive had trolled she could not force down quivering raw, the girl had subsisted through an eternity on only the jelly-like meat of the drinking nuts.

Now, however, in the jangling overstrain of nerve, muscle, the bananas served but to prove this a good island with abundant water. She was furious. She berated the savage shrilly. She was violent, absurdly impotent, wholly juvenile. She cried out that she would have been safely away had she not waited. He was a brute, a beast!

The brown man showed neither hurt, amusement, anger. He threw himself to the sand at her feet—asleep.

Palmyra stared down at him, hot eyed. This power instantly to turn sleep on or off, did it not name him utterly the machine? Here was no heart, brain; only wheels and springs, and a regulating dial. Set going by the original evil impulse, there

could be no deviation. What a fool she had been to expect it.

She wept, sat down, reached for a banana. She was very miserable; also hungry. Presently she took another banana.

In the moonlight the upper leaves of the palms glistened like varnish, but the massed shadow beneath lay black, forbidding.

She should have been away among those trees, yet all she seemed able to do was eat and cry and show a melancholy interest in a little hermit crab moving across the glinting sand. The girl was fiercely self-contemptuous.

Among crustaceans, the hermit crab is without a crust, being, like man, born naked. Forward he is bluff enough, with a hard hat and ready claws, but aft he is all cowering blubber. Adam, somewhat similarly disadvantaged, has been able to advance from leaves into modish worsteds, but the crab still lumbers about in the rag-tag of broken and discarded seashells, without style or pattern. His only new suits come when, as he grows, he has to discard a cramping armor for one of larger bore.

As Palmyra now watched the hermit on the glinting sand, the creature chanced upon an empty shell. He investigated it. Then with a look in all directions to see that no enemy was waiting to pounce upon him in his moment of defenselessness, he pulled himself out of his own shell, backed into the new one, strutted away.

The girl smiled again somberly. "Women and hermit crabs are alike," she thought. "Born to need a protector, we cannot, in our weakness, choose, but

must accept whatever shell of strength is flung into our way." She looked at the sleeper. "In my danger of Ponapé Burke I have had to depend on this savage. Can I, when opportunity affords, like yonder crab discard this incongruous armor for the natural protector of my own wish? Or must I forever . . ."

Palmyra, during an interval, was asleep.

As the savage lay, the knife sheath on his belt was uppermost. When the girl's eyes re-opened they became fixed upon that blade. It was very close. Almost she could reach out and touch the handle. She thought of the other times she would have disarmed him.

She helped herself to a third banana and stared at the knife. Now that good Mother Earth had eased the numb misery of bone and muscle, Palmyra was reverting to her original instinct of hostility. The reaction had come more slowly here than on that other island. During the lifetime intervening he had gained an ascendancy over her. But, back again in her own element, she loathed this creature who had abducted her; who, after all she had suffered at his hands, refused her one drink of water.

As she sat, her fingers went out once and again experimentally toward the knife, and were withdrawn. The savage, contrary to her expectations, did not awake to accuse her. She knew by now it really made no difference who had the knife. Her impulse was merely such an expression of helplessness as causes the child, powerless in adult hands, to find relief in trivial violence, obviously futile.

Her strongest feeling in this juvenile mood seemed



anger, not at his crime, but at his method. He kept on treating her *like a child*. When he wished her to move he snatched her up as an infant, heedless of her kicks and squalls. When he wanted sleep, he fell asleep in the assurance she was too infantile to seek safety in flight. And, as for the water, when she voiced a perfectly natural, terribly imperative need—a mere whim! Was it not maddening?

A third time, then, her hand went out—and closed upon the wooden handle. The knife was loose in the sheath. Slowly she drew the weapon forth.

The girl was thrilled, intimidated by her success. Olive had become so much the ogre that she had had the feeling it would be impossible, in slightest degree, to thwart him. Yet here, by reaching out her hand, she had his precious knife!

But, disconcertingly, she discovered now she did not know what to do next. She looked at the blade and then at that bare breast. He thought her such an infant. Yet, one blow—and she could take his life.

She did not shudder at the thought as she had once before. Association had made a serious purpose no longer possible. She only glowed in a new sense of power, restoring her self-esteem, her good-humor.

Quickly, however, this elation faded. In its place she found, to her surprise, a touch of guilt, as if she had been untrue to a trust. He *had* trusted her, and now, lying there in all his strength, he was like Samson. How had Delilah felt as the shears cut through the last of those locks? But Palmyra was



not irrevocably the Delilah, for she could restore the knife.

She was, indeed, leaning forward with that purpose, when the savage awoke. Panic stricken, the girl jerked back, not in fear of his anger, but in a guilty apprehension that, seeing the knife above him, he might think she attempted murder.

Unaware, the brown man sat up at once, looked at the heavens, his clock. Then he sprang to his feet, caught her up once more like a child, started for the canoe.

Palmyra wanted to give the knife back, but her arm was pinioned. She tried to bring it forward, felt the brown man's precautionary tightening of his hold, became again conscious of her grievance, jerked vigorously.

Olive was like a long-suffering parent. He did not know why she resisted, but he did know he could bundle her up close in his arms, with one broad hand across her mouth.

Sudden rage possessed the girl. She would *not* be treated so. She struggled with all her might. The knife impeded her and she flung it down.

The blade fell noiselessly. As it struck in the flooding moonlight it sent out one futile flash. But the savage, all unaware, marched on, holding the girl in vise-like grip.

She could not, if she would, have warned him now.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### FIRE—AND SMOKE

WHEN Olive had carried Palmyra thus uncere-  
moniously down to their canoe, the sea was not long  
in reasserting its power. Her respite had been too  
brief for any real rally against the tyrant savage.

As the craft cut its way through the water, the  
girl was increasingly sorry for what she had done.  
Her act had not been deliberate, but afterwards, at  
the canoe, she had failed to call his attention to the  
empty sheath.

She was astonished now that so infallible a machine  
should not almost immediately have discovered the  
loss.

Not, however, until the hour for bananas and  
cocoanut did the square copper hand go back after  
the blade. Then there appeared upon that face  
what was actually an expression—puzzled, startled,  
bereaved. Palmyra could, almost for the first time,  
follow the processes of that obscure intelligence:  
Did I forget to put the knife back after cutting the  
cocoanuts? Could the steel have fallen out of the  
sheath as I lay asleep? Or—was it this traitorous  
girl?

The queer brown-shot eyes fixed themselves upon  
her. For a moment there seemed a pained reproach  
in them, but he spoke no word. Instead, he stooped,  
and she saw with a gasp that he was drawing from  
its place a heavy stick.

The massive countenance showed no sign of anger, but there never was any sign upon it of the emotions which held violent sway within. If it were not the face of one moved to brute fury, neither was it a face to forgive such treachery.

The girl crouched on her perch. Did he mean to beat her with that cudgel? Did he think he, a kanaka, could strike an American girl? Was it in his mind she would submit like a naked brown woman to drudgery and the strokes of a club?

She had never dared stand on her lurching platform. But now, all caution forgotten, she waited. Rather than suffer a blow, she would, like a cornered animal, spring at him with one desperate lunge from the hidden knife.

The savage towered above her. But, at the instant of her thrust, he inverted the stick, pushed it down through a chink in the platform to the bottom of the canoe, motioned her to grip the wood and hold it firmly vertical.

Palmyra stared.

The brown man picked up one of the cocoanuts, and cautioned her with those square hands, so expressive where his face was blank. Then he raised the nut and brought it down upon the sharpened point. The wood entered the green husk. With a sidewise prying motion that wrenched her hands, despite the supporting framework, he tore off a section of the husk. Again the nut came down upon the point, impaling itself, and in a moment the whole husk was removed.

She had thought he meant to strike her. The truth, as she now saw, was that he had not even

meant to reproach her by word or look. Once more he treated her as a child; one acting without perception of consequences; to be granted unending patience.

She looked at the stick that had brought them so near tragedy. About three feet long and an inch and a half through, its end was worn smooth by use. She had never heard of the *drun*, or *ak*, the husking stake of mangrove wood. But she surmised correctly that, driven into the ground ashore, it, rather than the knife, was the usual implement.

After Olive had husked several of the nuts, he opened two by pecking them with the sharp end of a third, trepanning them as neatly as a surgeon.

The girl accepted food and drink humbly. She was, she reflected, like a bear she'd heard of, with its face full of porcupine quills. Starving, it had cornered a settler in its desperate need of aid. The man had understood. But as he plucked the last of the quills, the beast had begun to snarl and snap: not in ingratitude but in fright.

Palmyra was perceiving that most of the ghastly blood-lettings which have stained the intercourse of man have had their origin, not in the murder lust, but in misunderstanding and in fear.

She would have struck her knife to the heart of this brown man—and he had meant only to give her food!

Her eyes filled. With a girlish impulse she thrust her hand into her dress and drew out the weapon. She would make amend.

There was something very sweet in the gesture, in the expression with which she offered the knife.

But the savage accepted her surrender in the serene seeming unconsciousness of the Buddhas when their devotees lay before them gifts that may have meant months, perhaps years, of sacrifice.

She had expected at least surprise. His restraint toward her had convinced her that other fingers than his had pried at the *Lupé-a-Noa's* cabin skylight and dropped the blade. But shortly she realized he would have known anyway, for she must have revealed its possession when, following their swim, she cut herself free of the cocoanut floats.

The girl returned dutifully to scanning the ocean for Burke's topsails. Herself alone she would have thought of the schooner as worlds away by now. But the eyes of the brown man seldom for long left the skyline. This being so, she could only expect the enemy at any moment. If the infallible Olive looked for Burke to reappear, then, of a certainty, Burke would reappear.

But, though she watched the sea, the girl recognized her futility as a lookout. This was since she had given a startled cry and, pointing, had proclaimed the Pigeon of Noah. Olive, surprisingly, had seemed at a loss; unable to make out the little triangle of white so plain to her. And then—she had discovered what he had probably known for an hour; that it was a cloud.

As they skimmed along today they picked up presently another island. Palmyra thought this one, with those of yesterday afternoon and last night, might be parts of the same lagoon. And she soon saw Olive was keeping well away. A lone fisherman they sighted in his canoe, but her companion at once

lowered the sail and paddled hard a-port, so they passed too wide for observation. No fisherman should testify to strange canoes and stranger passengers.

Sight of the place, however, brought again to the girl's lips a question which often had trembled there but never found utterance. Always before, when she would have asked of the island of Jaluit, doubt, fear, had silenced her. Eagerly as she might wish to confirm her hope, she had been held back by a lurking dread of its annihilation.

But today, in the mood following her brutal misjudgment of the brown man, hope had risen into what seemed certainty. Strange indeed as it might appear, he had sprung from the void as a knight errant to carry her to the place of refuge.

And now, in this new sense of trust, she turned quickly to him, her cheeks flushing, and spoke his name as nearly as she could in the way he liked: "O-lee-vay."

He looked up surprised.

"O-lee-vay," she repeated—"Ja—Jaluit?"

He did not comprehend. She tried the pronunciation with varying inflections. Then, perception.

The savage grinned, raised an arm and, cheerfully informative—*pointed astern*.

The girl caught her breath. "Oh, no, no!" she cried in panic. "You don't, don't understand. Ja-luit—Ja-lu-eet."

But all too plainly he did understand. And he was sailing directly *away* from her one chance of rescue.

Slowly the girl turned from this being. Her



instinctive trust destroyed, she realized only now how much her hope of Jaluit had sustained her. She was—crushed.

For two or three hours they flew on in silence.

Then Palmyra was roused, startled, by an exclamation behind her. When she looked, the savage pointed broad of the starboard bow. She could see nothing, and he had to make the sign of the scar before she grasped that the Pigeon of Noah was in sight.

But the girl seemed to have no reserve of emotion left to bestow. As she gazed dully out over the water her strongest feeling, perhaps, was a curiosity as to how he could identify this craft, invisible to her. Were all vessels different as to their topmasts, or was it that no other sail could be expected on this empty ocean?

Palmyra did not long try to make out the schooner. Rather, she faced away and sat, her eyes fixed mistily on the horizon to port, with its low-lying manifestation of cloud.

In her bitter disillusionment she felt it made little difference now whether or no the white man overhauled the brown.

As time went on she was aware that the savage kept his gaze to starboard, though he had not yet found it necessary to lower his sail. But she hardly cared.

She continued to sit, outwardly submissive, inwardly alive with passionate rebellion at her fate. It seemed unbelievable that, in all the teeming world of man, none should know her terrible need, come in this moment of crisis to snatch her away.

As she stared unblinkingly across the seas the low black streamer of cloud unavoidably, in the intensity of her desire, suggested to her mind the smoke of a vessel racing to her aid.

The cloud, as is now and then the case, was not unlike the smudge from a funnel. And, in her fatigue, her helplessness, the very impossibility of the thing gave to this product of her imagination an extraordinary power.

She saw the steamer rising from the ocean. She climbed its ladder to the rail. And there, triumphant on its deck, she was safe!

And in that moment she knew she could not be hard on the brown man. She would not demand his punishment. Only a savage after all—no knight errant of the deep sea—his very savagery was his excuse. He had known no better, was not to be blamed. Yet he'd been kind to her and he *had* saved her from Burke.

At the parting she would thank him. She would load his canoe with gifts. Or, better still, though he'd carried her wide of her own port of refuge, she would give him passage to some island beyond reach of the murderous Ponapé.

And then, suddenly, Palmyra Tree was back in the canoe, her heart beating to suffocation. For her dream was not a dream. The cloud was not a cloud. It was smoke, smoke! smoke!!

*Her ship had come!*

## CHAPTER XXXV

### A MESSAGE IS DELIVERED

THE Imperial Japanese Gunboat Okayama, upon a preceding day, had been steaming against the sea when word came down to Commander Sakamoto that a sail had been sighted, apparently a raft with shipwrecked white men. The Okayama swung over so as to bring the odd float aboard. Soon Sakamoto, through his glasses, made out an American flag, union down.

"Send their officer aft," he instructed.

Presently John Thurston and Van Buren Rutger came striding along the deck. For Thurston and his crew, by the exercise of no small ingenuity, had got their crazy craft together again and were once more bravely under way.

Sakamoto, seeing he had to do with gentlemen, offered his hand in congratulation. "And I hope," he added when they were seated, "you, you leaved your peoples comfortable—on their desert island?"

The white men were surprised.

Sakamoto spoke their language poorly. Preceding each phrase there was a pause while he, with visibly moving lips, made sure of his course before venturing on among the linguistic reefs.

He was pleased now by the surprise of the two men. He had identified them correctly. "Nothing," he commented airily, "shall escape very long time

the, the eye of Japanese naval administration. It sees all."

Thurston sprang up. "My God, Captain," he cried, "you've heard from her? You've got her safe?"

It was the commander's turn to be puzzled. He knew no reason for this emotion.

"Is she unharmed?" Thurston implored. Then, with a changed thought: "You have her aboard!"

Sakamoto held up his hand. "My dear—mister," he warned. "Spik a little more slow. What do you mean—her?—she?"

"But you knew of the wreck," expostulated Van. "You could only know of it through her. Miss Tree; Palmyra Tree of Boston."

The commander begged for an account of what had happened. But when they had reached the abduction, he himself jumped up, interrupting excitedly. There was a new look on his face, a look that had advanced through astonished incredulity into mortification and distress.

"Now I—onderstand," he cried. "Of her I—know only one things. This Ponapé—she is out of his hands."

"Thank God!" from Thurston.

But Sakamoto exclaimed. "No, no! It is—not good. It is bad. Ponapé has losed her because a kanaka, O-lee-vay, has taken her—for himself."

"The damned animal!" raged Van. "I always knew he was bad."

The commander turned and spoke to his orderly. A moment later the man hurried to him with what looked a little like the stub of a lead pencil. From it

they saw the Japanese take a tightly rolled core of paper. He unrolled this and handed it to Thurston, who found it covered with red markings in an unknown tongue.

Sakamoto, in his cautious English, went on to explain. A large native craft had beaten out after the Okayama, signalling urgently. Aboard was an island pastor with one of his villagers, upon whose feeding roost—maintained for these man-o'-war hawks the Line islanders sometimes used as a sort of carrier pigeon—a stray bird had alighted with a strange letter. Most imperative!

"I do not—spik the Marshall island language yet," the Japanese added, "but the—the pastor is very good to spik English. He trans-lates it to me."

The important part of the letter for the officer had been the wrecking of an American yacht. Her people might be without food, water. He had got under way at once.

"The letter also spik of stealing—young lady," added Sakamoto after a little hesitation. "But I, I pay no attention to that."

The Americans were aghast. "No attention!"

The commander showed embarrassment. He should, he admitted, have guessed. The letter had concerned itself with the abduction. And the pastor, who had brought it aboard, knowing the two men it concerned, had held this outrage could be no ordinary affair; *O-lee-vay* being of remarkable bravery, and Ponapé unusually bad, even for a white man.

But that a native should steal an American girl was so unheard of, it had never entered Sakamoto's

mind. And she had been referred to as "Cocoanut." Hence the commander had assumed it to be the abduction of an unimportant local chief's daughter—a minor police matter.

Thurston groaned.

Van Buren Rutger was moving about miserably.

Commander Sakamoto spoke in sympathy. "It is very good thing," he said, "the bird stop wrong place with the letter, and spoil—the plan. This letter says after Ponapé had stole the high-chief lady, the native stoled her a-gain from Ponapé and, and now they . . ." He groped longer than usual for the right expression. "And now they, they con-tend for her very big," he went on with satisfaction. "O-lee-vay's friends were to hurry with man-y boat and arms, Ponapé being strong man, to certain island—and save him there so he shall, shall get away nice—with her for himself."

An oath broke through Thurston's clenched teeth.

Sakamoto tried to reassure. "You have been—how we say it?—fortu-nate in your mis-fortune," he said. "If we hadn't got the bird letter, the Okayama never comes back this, this part of group for three, four month. And the wreck, she is a place never visited by navy or ci-vilian, most never maybe by natives."

As concerned their own effort, that of itself might mean the salvation of the poor young woman. Having misinterpreted the letter, Sakamoto had been doubly wrong. If a native girl had been abducted, then there must be a native population at the sight of the wreck. Of the half dozen islets that could be considered as lying within the general location named,



three had small settlements. These the Okayama would have tried first and then been at a loss. Two or three days might have been sacrificed.

"But now," he concluded, "no time shall, shall be lost. I promise you Imperial Japanese navy shall do everything. We go at once and rescue—your friends from shipwreck island."

"But, Captain," cried Thurston, "I beg of you, I implore you not to give a moment to them. It is Miss Tree who is in deadly need."

The Japanese looked friendly from one white man to the other. "My dear—misters; calm yourselves. We must pick up the, the trail near its start. Now we have come so far—the wreck will not be much out of fi-nal bearings. It costs us maybe one, two hour only."

Commander Sakamoto turned and gave an order for the new course.

And then it was "Full speed ahead."

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE LAST HOPE

PALMYRA's impulse on sighting this seeking ship—for it was the Okayama—was to whirl around and shout the joyful fact. In this moment all her new aversion for the brown man was forgotten. But, as she moved, the words froze upon her lips. They two, by this intervention, were no longer friends. From the steamer Olive would fly almost as quickly as from the Pigeon of Noah.

What should she do? She dared not look toward the smoke for fear of attracting his attention. But a signal of some sort was imperative. Lacking it, the ship would pass, without interest, and never know. And to sit with folded hands and suffer such calamity was unthinkable.

The smoke was quite visibly nearer now. The steamer was coming up rapidly. Palmyra had assumed that the savage, watching in the opposite direction for Burke, was unaware. But gradually she perceived the absurdity of this. Olive, most probably, had already known, even when he pointed out the schooner. He had merely hoped she would not discover it for herself. Possibility of rescue meant re-aroused opposition.

Ponapé Burke also must have sighted the ship. Was that why he had veered away? She was puzzled for only a moment. This would be the Japanese man-o'-war.

The gunboat was presently abreast of them, yet still, to the girl's eyes, nothing but smoke. Palmyra had anticipated that it might come quite close. Now she realized it would never be nearer—unless summoned.

She was appalled at her helplessness. But in this crisis she happened to think again of the small mirror with which, on her prison island, she had meant to attract some canoe. Marvelously, it had survived all her adventures. She drew the glass out cautiously. The brown man, behind her, must not see.

She had little, if any, hope of success. Heliographing was done from an altitude, not flat on the water. Also, she knew no code. She would try because there was absolutely nothing else to try, and she could not remain inert with her last hope of rescue fading away. She was saying fiercely to herself that, if the invisible *Lupé-a-Noa* had been plainly in sight for Olive, then on this invisible cruiser there could be, must be, eyes capable of catching the mirror flash.

The sun was in the right quarter for her effort. She held the glass close against her body so that the man behind should not see. But, try as she might, she could not synchronize with the constant shift of the canoe. Almost she had despaired, when, unexpectedly, the savage spoke.

The girl clutched the mirror convulsively. Then, knowing she must respond, she dropped it into her dress and turned—to find Olive grinning so broadly she saw he must, from the first, have been aware. Shock of discovery, however, lay, not in discovery, but in the fact that he had known all along and had

*not* interfered. The man-o'-war must be distant indeed.

Olive now held up the steering paddle, pointed to it and then to her. He had amused himself by waiting to see how long she would require originally to discover the smoke. And now he taunted her with her helplessness. If she would get aboard, the girl saw, she must depend upon her own futile paddle.

But the savage had intended more keenly to express his derision. He thrust the dripping blade again into the water and then raised it diagonally to the sun. The canoe came up on a crest and then, astonishingly, the flat of the paddle seemed to flash into living flame.

Even in her surprise, Palmyra recollected Ponapé Burke as having said that, when the natives were after a school of mullet, the scouts heliographed back to the fleet, their wet paddles reflecting like mirrors. And this grinning fiend now mocked her anguish by showing her how to make an effective signal.

The girl burst into bitter tears.

Olive, amusedly helpful, made his paddle flash and flash. And when she, in despair, begged, ordered him to overtake the vanishing vessel, he threw the bow a-port with sinister alacrity and went tearing after.

But she was not deceived. He was doing now what he would have done anyway; what he had done that first time with the Pigeon of Noah: falling into the gunboat's wake as the place least likely to be covered again. Safest, also, from Ponapé Burke.

How the girl hated this being who, secure from the distant and incurious Jap, could divert himself

with her sufferings in this, the climax of her drama of woe.

Palmyra could bear no more. With a cry of anguish she dropped down on the platform and hid her face. She could not sit and watch that ship, the only living thing in this infinity of waters, melt into the unknown, fade until even its friendly trail of smoke was gone, abandon her to her fate.

Aboard the Imperial Japanese Gunboat Okayama as it passed within arm's reach of the distracted girl and then steamed on, was the ship's company of the wrecked Yacht Rainbow. Gathered on the deck were all who best had loved Palmyra Tree in life. But though these swept the sea with their binoculars until eyes could stand no more, none ever knew.

Even as the girl made piteous attempt to cast a mirror's ray across the gulf, Commander Sakamoto was turning to John Thurston with fatal decision.

"My dear—mister," he said. "That Ponapé—he has caught the poor Miss Tree back a-gain—very sure. We got the bird letter and that ruin all the kanaka's chance. For him to reach this far unhelped, even if no-body makes some chase, would be of a—too much. To come he must, must have sailed from lagoon to lagoon; and we try all likely one—and hear nothing."

To make the last point of call, he held, they had dropped foolishly far south; altogether out of any possible course.

Wherefore, Sakamoto, put all to the wrong by Olive's strategy of stealth and deviousness, threw

the Okayama northward and steamed forever out of the field of pursuit; never again to pass within sight of canoe or schooner; deserting the girl in that hour when white savage and brown closed in for possession of her body.



## CHAPTER XXXVII

### REALIZATION

ALMOST, Palmyra had ceased to think where her savage took her. With the passing of the Okayama she no longer struggled against a conviction that this brown being was an agency of predestination. She was in his hands: he carried her where he willed.

As she sat now, clinging automatically to the little platform, sunk in a lethargy of fatigue, she had a vision of herself as she some day would be, hidden away forever in the thatches of an unknown isle. There she would live among these brown people. They'd be kind to her, perhaps; very probably so. But when the Japanese inspected the island, the people would hide her away. She'd lie silent, quite close, peering out through the woven blind in despair. And the Japanese would pass by, never knowing that here a once fair American girl dragged out a miserable existence.

There should have been tragedy in this picture, but there was not. Perhaps she was too tired by now to feel anything greatly, or perhaps she had never, even yet, come really to believe.

The first of this flight had been marked by a terrible indecision as between Ponapé Burke and his great savage. But that was only in the beginning. Days of fellowship with the one in flight from the other, of hardship endured and danger met, had

made her decision for her. Whatever befell, she would stand with the brown man as against the white.

But as that conflict had faded, its place had been taken by another: a re-aroused uncertainty concerning Van Buren Rutger and John Thurston. And this problem had now come to absorb almost all her coherent thought.

At first she had been unconscious of any questioning of Van. It had been there, but she had not perceived. She had given him her love, irrevocably, for better, for worse. The wreck, with its revelation, made no difference. Aboard the *Lupé-a-Noa* she had still thought of him in all tenderness.

But that, that was centuries ago. Into one short week since she had crowded the sensations, the development of a lifetime. She had been a girl then; she was a woman now.

Indeed, sinking under an unbearable burden of fatigue, her feeling was a curious parallel to that of the aging woman who sits by the fire and thinks of her departed girlhood. From a full experience of life, Palmyra looked back upon herself.

Always now she thought of her two lovers as the old woman the loves of youth. For it seemed these two, together with that youth, had been buried long ago. When she spoke of them it was as of something irrevocably gone.

"*If*," she would say to herself, "*if* it were all to happen again, would Van seem what he did? *If* I could get back out of this grave of waters, would I understand John now?"

It was her admiration of the savage which had

wrought the change; her admiration of his strength, his courage, his resourcefulness; his ability always to do exactly that which the crisis of the moment demanded. Once he had begun to remind her of John Thurston, Van's day was done.

But it was only after the Japanese gunboat had abandoned her that she chanced to think of her betrothed in the terms of the wedding service: "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health . . ." Until now these had seemed but rhetorical juxtapositions; phantom shadows introduced to bring into higher light pleasant realities.

For, in the narrow experience of that girl who once had been, life really had seemed to come, ready-ordered from the atelier—lacquered, perfumed. Man made none of it for himself; not even the wealth—an inherited blessing. One asked of a husband only that he be good looking, well dressed, entertaining; never that he be able, with bare hands, to tear from flinty city or wilderness, food, shelter, for those he loved. In such an atmosphere as she had breathed, the courage, the force, the qualities of real manliness—these might indeed have had no chance to impress themselves upon the understanding of budding girlhood.

But now, belatedly, the analogy she had drawn between herself and the hermit crab came home with real meaning. As the crab had chosen of protecting shells, so had she chosen. And it had been Van! To shield her from the brutal thrust of life, to fight for her, save her from Ponapé Burke and from Olive, it must have been Van—poor Van!

Suddenly now Palmyra Tree had achieved the

truth. "If," she cried in a new poignancy of realization, "if it were not too late; if I could but once more meet John Thurston face to face, I would step up to him and say: 'John, my eyes have been opened. At last, at last I see.'"

So preoccupied was the girl with this revelation that she had not discovered a something rising from the sea dead ahead; a something which had looked like a ship, but was turning into an island; not flat coral, but a rock mounting sheer above the water to a considerable height.

This mass of basalt was well defined when she, with a start, became aware of its existence. She stared in astonishment. Never before had they seen a high island and never before had they approached land in daylight.

Palmyra's knowledge of their course was so vague that she had not known whether they sailed the Sunrise or the Sunset chain of the Marshalls. But she was sure both were exclusively low, whereas in the Carolines, atolls and volcanic crags were intermingled, such islands as Ponapé and Kusaié rising more than two thousand feet.

Could then this rock ahead mean they had crossed over? She had thought of the Carolines as impossibly remote, although Van had found from his chart that one of them—Mokil, she was sure—lay no more than a hundred and fifty miles from the nearest of the Marshalls. But she felt this might be toward the north, and concluded their present discovery was no more than an isolated projection.

As they drew nearer she saw that the island, per-

pendicular on its other faces, broke down toward them in a miniature valley with all its surface in view. But even here, despite some coral outcroppings that checked the seas, she could find no landing place. It was obvious the rock would be difficult of access in fair weather, impossible in foul; and that, barren, it would be uninhabited.

Olive inspected it for a time in what she surmised to be a fear some chance party of natives might be venturing there. Detecting no life, he presently lowered the sail and paddled in lee of a ledge of coral that served as a breakwater.

At perhaps a hundred feet from the surf which burst against the rock, they came to rest in water about two fathoms deep. From the bottom, coral trees rose at intervals, their branches ending pudgily like the frangipani jasmine. A school of rainbow fish came floating by and she saw below, lying on the sand, one of the great clams—*tridacna gigas*—that sometimes weigh as much as five hundred pounds. She noted with interest the four-inch scallops or teeth along its edge, from which the islanders had made shell adzes at a time when savage Europe depended on the inferior stone axe.

What was Olive intending here? He held a polished cocoanut shell, whole save where the eyes were perforated. A loop of sennit was rove through two of these and a leaf cork stopped the third. It was evidently a container. At thought of water she moistened her lips regretfully.

The brown man now, to her surprise, stepped overboard with the shell, coming down without a splash. As he paused, grinning up at her, his hand on the



gunwale, she thought he must intend swimming ashore. But, unexpectedly, he dived. There was one plop of his toes at the surface and then she saw his outreaching fingers clutch a stone at the bottom. He brought his feet down and moved, crouching, as if he were stooped on dry land, looking for something lost.

She could see as well as if there were no water. Olive was moving to one side now. The great clam was lying immediately behind him, its upper shell raised like a trap. She was momentarily uneasy, then laughed. Ferocious and hungry as the clam looked, it was inert; could not spring upon the unsuspecting man to devour him.

Briefly she had a lingering wish that she had pointed out the shell. Then the absurdity of the thing struck her—that she should presume to warn this amphibian who knew all, saw all—and she laughed again. But, suddenly, before she could realize it as she looked placidly on, he had shifted, stepped backwards. The trap snapped shut across his foot.

Instantly, the brown body was contorted. A gush of bubbles—silver globules streaming upward from his frantic cry. The girl uttered a shriek, covered her eyes.

Why, why had she not warned him! She'd known the danger. Ponapé Burke had told: a native diver—shell clamped down upon his hand. Two fingers caught in that death grip. Awfully, with his knife, the boy had chopped off his fingers—escaped. But Olive had not even that alternative.

Down there, scarce a dozen feet away, the last of



those dreadful silvered blobs must even now be rising. Even now his last struggle was ending, and she—she could not save.

But, as the girl lay, shuddering, something wet touched her arm. Recoiling with a gasp, she found herself looking into the dripping face of the brown man, which smiled pleasantly. For a moment she stared at it. Then the face became vague, distant—disappeared.

When she reopened her eyes she knew that she had fainted. Olive, sustaining himself with one square hand upon the canoe, was holding her in place. But for that grasp, she herself must be down there now, lying where she had thought to see him lying—dead.

She looked at this creature, awed. He was alive, seemingly unharmed; rather pleased with himself and her astonishment. She mustered courage to peer down into the water. The shell of the giant bivalve again was somewhat raised, and there was no sign of that which she had dreaded to see. She leaned out further: Olive's feet were both where they should have been.

He drew the knife she had given him and with a gesture or two made all plain. Where the frenzied youth, losing his presence of mind, had hacked off his own fingers, Olive had thrust the blade in between the valves of the clam's armor and severed the muscles that snapped these together.

Having explained, he rescued the cocoanut shell, which was bobbing away on the water, and prepared to dive anew. When she understood the girl cried

out in protest. "Oh, don't, don't try again. I, I cannot bear it!"

He divined her meaning, grimaced back reassuringly. A moment later he was once more crouched, holding to the lava floor. And once again there came, startlingly, that stream of silver bubbles. Only now did she see that this had not been the breath of life, but air from the nut, which had slipped out of his grasp when the trap chopped down upon his foot.

For an interval the bubbles came flying up. Then the man followed. He placed the shell in the canoe, lifted himself aboard, scarcely listed the frail craft from an even keel. One sweeping glance, lest Ponapé Burke might have come upon them unawares. Then he hoisted sail and they were away.

The girl, still dizzy with shock, sat and stared at the cocoanut bottle that had brought tragedy so near. Olive, amused, presently picked it up and offered it. When she did not respond, he raised the shell above his mouth, tilted it until the contents spurted out—and drank.

Palmyra laughed hysterically. He had filled the thing at the bottom of the ocean a hundred feet from land. Yet now he drank.

She took the sphere when he offered it again and tasted experimentally: sweet fresh water; clear, cold as from a spring.

Her companion attempted to explain. He pointed in at the water in the shell, then at the island, then to the sky above. He dipped his hand into the sea, pointed again toward the sky, held his fingers so they should drip. Palmyra saw that here was the

product of rain falling upon the land. But the South Sea native could not explain that the conformation of certain islands is such that their only spring opens on the ocean floor. In some of these the vent is uncovered at low tide; in others one must always dive.

The girl drank deeply. Then, holding the shell upon her knees, she sat for a long time, looking covertly at this brown being.

He had all but given life itself that she might have the water she craved.

And he *would* have given life itself had she taken his knife and not granted her own.

He would be—*dead!*

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### ETERNITY GROWS OLD

THE day which followed was much like those preceding except that, as the hours went by, Palmyra discovered in her navigator a growing dissatisfaction. He grumbled, felt the wind, glowered at the sky. Could it incredibly be that this infallible machine was at fault?

Presently, in explanation, the brown man pointed to the sand in the canoe—an island. Then he extended his arm: the island was located; there ahead and somewhere, unseen, to starboard. Then he flattened out his palm horizontally, laid his cheek upon it, attempted an expression of relaxed comfort; closed his eyes and began to snore.

The girl dared not accept the glorious vision this pantomime created. But so evident the good-humored satisfaction of the grin which followed, that she gave a cry of delight. Their haven was at hand.

Soon would this nightmare of wind and sea be ended. Soon would she be liberated from this rack of torture. She could throw herself down in never-waking slumber.

Her hand stole toward the opening of her dress and her fingers closed, caressingly, over the handle of the knife hidden there. For Olive had given it back. And having done so with their destination almost in sight, he must have meant it as a symbol. She looked at

the brown man and—someway, somehow—she was not afraid.

But her companion's mind was on things more immediate. He startled her by making upon his forehead the sign of the scar. He pointed to windward and to lee, and shrugged. Burke, then, might patrol these waters. Very probably he lay in wait.

Olive's explanation went on. Much of it she did not get. But she saw that the breeze was laggard, the sun rushed forward with disconcerting speed. He had hoped to make his landfall in the dark of the coming night. But their progress was too slow. Ponapé Burke could call the morrow's sun to his aid.

From time to time Olive pointed out the position of the invisible island. Yet when night came he did not make for it, but sailed wide of their course. She saw his aim was to outwit the white man by approaching the island from a direction unexpected.

She wondered how Burke had known they would come to this particular place. Was it Olive's home? She hoped the enemy was still drinking, so that his powers would not be at their best.

With daylight, the sun, leaping from behind the morning bank, brought an intensity of emotion. The girl trembled with excitement, the savage grinned with unbelievable ferocity. For there before them loomed their fate; a dim shape, vague, rising between sea and cloud, incredibly remote. And on the course lurked the Pigeon of Noah, ready to swoop down upon them, a bird of prey.

The girl could not know that such a volcanic peak, perhaps twenty-three hundred feet in height, would be visible sixty or seventy miles at sea. But she did

recognize it as a mountainous island, larger than anything since Hawaii, and still far distant. She was eager to ask its name, but did not know how.

Ponapé island, from which Burke had taken his sobriquet, was, of course, out of the question. Kusaié, also, she dismissed, although she did recall that Marshall island canoes were not infrequently blown across to it in storm. Mokil was the only other name she knew. Obviously, there could be additional peaks, and nearer.

The brown navigator was putting the tiny craft hard for the island now, holding her to it until the water rose along the lee gunwale in a rounded silver line. Muttering grotesque prayers or imprecations, he kept watch for the enemy. Palmyra with the bailer, a skillfully contrived scoop of wood, threw out the brine as it slopped aboard.

Away and away they flew. And then, stealthily, there came slipping along the skyline two needle points of mast and a twinkle of canvas in the morning sun. Olive grunted savagely and snapped his great square teeth together. The girl seized her paddle.

But even in this moment of fear he found time to point quizzically at the blade, then toward the Lupé-a-Noa. If she chose to flash the wet wood in signal now, Ponapé Burke would see and come to rescue. The girl's answer was to work the paddle with doubled vigor.

And presently the schooner had passed them by, unseeing. Palmyra laughed stridently in relief. But her companion's grin had an anxious twist.

Again the topmasts appeared. Burke was standing grimly off and on between them and their haven.



He had now, as ill luck would have it, caught them near the angle of his course as the Pigeon of Noah came about. He had passed them far to starboard; soon he would have them to port, and close.

Olive snatched down sail and mast. He lashed them flat. With a glance he assured himself everything aboard was secure. Then, paddle in hand, he kept their craft to the hollow of the seas.

But on, on came the topmasts, the topsails, rising against the sky. The girl gasped in terror. On came the sails, on and on, nearer and nearer, taller and more definite—more greatly to be dreaded.

And then, in this awful moment, without word of warning, Olive sprang overboard. Palmyra uttered a wail. After all he had braved, to forsake her now? To seek his own safety in flight? No! It was unthinkable!

And scarcely the unworthy thought, than the brown man's hand shot up, seized the outrigger, gave one twist. The next second Palmyra was floundering in the water, the canoe capsized.

With a stroke the savage reached out and caught her by the hair. As a kitten held in its mother's teeth, she ceased to struggle. With another stroke he recaptured the canoe, bottom up. He put his foot on the outrigger, tilted the hull so the imprisoned air escaped. With one arm he bore down upon the canoe, their combined weight, to sink it and control its motion. The other arm held the girl, submerged, so that she choked and fought for breath.

Thus they waited, Palmyra hardly hoping to live. Eternity grew old in that long-drawn strangling sus-

pense. The girl could not see. But she pictured the schooner, coming on, towering at last above them, the white man leering down in triumph.

But when emotion had become unbearable, when it seemed she must tear herself free, she felt, all at once, incredibly, that the great torso against which her head was pressed in vise-like grip, vibrated, shook with an infantile giggle.

On, on the *Lupé-a-Noa* indeed had come, nearer and nearer—but not too near. Careening under its spread of sail it had been unbelievably close and then, all unknowing, had flown away. Ponapé Burke, with his binoculars, had glared straight over them in his scrutiny of the more distant sea.

The brown amphibian, gradually relaxing his caution, first gave the girl a better chance to breathe. Then he righted the canoe. He unlashed its gear, rolled the mast, sprits, paddles into a bundle. These he placed under the girl's chin in the water, and let her go. She understood now why he had always kept everything lashed fast: that nothing should float free to catch Burke's eye.

As she rose and fell, gripping her life-preserver, Palmyra wondered whether their situation might not be desperate. In filling the canoe to escape the white man, Olive had saved them from one crisis only to throw them into another.

But the islander appeared to take no such dark view. Rather, he was in high good spirits. Seizing the craft with both hands, himself sitting up to the neck in the sea as one might in a chair, except that his legs fanned methodically back and forth across be-

neath him, he shot the canoe forward, then aft, then forward again. At each stop a part of the brine within gushed over prow or stern. With the bailer Olive quickly completed his work.

He placed the girl's hands on the now buoyant canoe, returned its gear, lifted himself up and in. He had stooped for the more difficult feat of hauling Palmyra aboard when, startingly, he let go his hold with a guttural cry.

She turned frightened eyes over her shoulder, then screamed. For there, cutting the surface, a little jet of spray rising from its edge, was another sail—the dreadful lateen of a shark!

The man-eater was almost upon her. Frantic, she turned her eyes to Olive. There he stood, for the first time at fault. His hand, with lightning instinct, had flown to the sheath on his belt, found it empty. The girl saw that, in throwing his knife away, she had made her own death certain.

But, instantly now, the savage rallied. Only for a second did paralyzing discovery unnerve him. The shark had all but seized its victim. A moment and action would be too late. But in that flash of time the man leaped, landed with his feet upon the shark's back. The impact threw the monster into brief panic.

The girl, by some miracle of fright, clambered into the canoe, half filling it. Olive, availing himself of the one chance, could have followed. But the canoe would not support them both. With an agony of appeal he looked up at her, held out his hand. The shark was returning to the charge.

But she understood. Thank God, she understood. She tore at her dress; thrust out the knife. He snatched it: dived.

The girl's hands flew to her eyes. She could not watch this man torn to pieces. He had saved her life once again, only to lose it with his own. For, left in the canoe, death was inevitable.

Only by the grace of a second or so had she got the knife into those sinewy fingers. But before she could close her eyes, she was aware that Olive's grin had returned with the touch of the steel. And when a horrid compulsion forced her to look again, she could see the smile even beneath the water.

So close the shark, Olive had sounded instantly. As his feet left the surface the fish shot across the place like a torpedo. Then the man rose to air beyond, grinning reassurance.

The shark turned to charge once more. The islander waited. A groan broke from the girl's lips. But just as the man-eater made to seize its prey, Olive dropped below the surface. The heavy fish had no chance to stop. As it swept over his head the savage thrust upward with the knife in a lunge that reached the heart.

Palmyra's knees wilted under her and she slumped into the half-filled canoe. But this time she must bear a part. The shark might be only wounded. She reached blindly for the scoop. She must bail, bail, bail.

And then, beside her craft, there appeared an unemotional brown face, the knife between its teeth tinged with blood. Steady handed, he took from

her trembling fingers the scoop, quickly cleared the canoe, lifted himself aboard.

The girl looked back at the water and found it red. With other sharks hurrying to feed, no place now for even this amphibian.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### BETWEEN PONAPÉ AND THE REEF

OLIVE did not waste time over the adventure of the shark. He had killed sharks before. Aside from the absence of his knife and the presence of a helpless female who might, in the excitement, fall overboard and drown, the affair had been commonplace.

Throwing the canoe into its course, he sailed on for the island.

With every hour this mass had been taking form. Sharp and angular in outline, it rose abruptly from the ocean into the clouds. These appeared in particular to have been impaled, in passage, on two needle peaks, set close together at the island's center, and dominating it.

But now again, when they were so close Palmyra could see that the mountains were forested to their very tops, could note where the plantations gave way to the bush, the Lupé-a-Noa came plowing down upon them. This time, however, the savage did not hide. The lesser risk lay in flight. He drove their cockle until the girl felt it must go over. But she worked steadily with the bailer. As additional sail, she spread the gay parasol that Olive, beset by deadly circumstance, had always managed to save.

For an interval they went on thus, before it became evident that Ponapé Burke had made them out.



Then the altering course of the schooner showed he meant to lay them aboard, either in recognition or for inspection.

They were paralleling the reef now, but at some distance. Nearest, was the long line of breakers that burst against this barrier surrounding the island. Beyond was a quarter-mile strip of shallow water on top of the reef. Then there rose mangroves, backed by the cocoanut plantations and the beautiful green tapestry of the treetops on the mountain slopes.

But the girl had no thought for these. Burke was overhauling the canoe with sickening speed. She looked piteously from the schooner to the face of her brown man. But it was still the same unrevealing mask. Did he know beyond question he could win to land, or was it that he had no hope at all?

She saw he looked frequently from the Pigeon of Noah to some point ahead. And presently he tried, with informative forefinger, to point out the reef opening they must gain to reach shore. The passage was still so far away she could not make it out, but she understood. If the white man, with his greater speed, could work in and head them off, their capture would be easy.

Olive held his canoe doggedly to its course. For these three who fought out this grim race—life, death or worse, its cup—how brutal the thrust of emotion. A while there seemed hope the canoe might yet achieve. Gradually, however, the girl came to feel this could never be. She wrung her hands in anguish. To have risked, to have suffered, to have all but won!

She stared ahead with tear-dimmed eyes. On the

one side the Lupé-a-Noa was crowding them in. On the other, the long cruel line of the surf drew near. Soon there could be no course to sail between the two.

Presently the schooner was so close Palmyra could make out Ponapé Burke on its deck, covering them with his glasses.

The reef wall was now so immediately at hand she could see that this rim, by reason of the coral broken off and packed down by the trample of the surf, was higher than the rest of the reef behind, the surface or reef-table, which stretched inland to the beach. The barrier was armored in brown knobs of living coral, with their toothed faces like a giant nutmeg grater against which the sea could grind the canoe into splinters.

From the top of a wave the girl would look beyond the surf to the protected shallow water on the reef. The next moment a sea would boil in, pause towering above the rim, crash down in an explosion that sent the spray sky high. And when the comber receded, the jagged coral, as if by its own animate motion, would rise ponderously out of the water, spouting brine; menace the canoe like the yawning jaws of some aged sea monster, with slimy yellowed fangs.

And now, as the girl looked, Olive dug his paddle in, put all his weight upon it. The craft veered and took a new course—straight for the reef. Palmyra sat stunned. She had hoped against hope that she was wrong, that he still saw a way. But here was surrender. Even for such a one there could be no further shift.

Scarcely had the canoe changed course than the

Pigeon of Noah also swung in toward the reef. Palmyra could see Ponapé Burke waving his arms, shouting orders. She gave one shuddering glance at the cauldron ahead, then back to the white man. The race was run.

And even now, in confirmation, Olive sprang up, let go the sheet, slashed the cords that held the mast; whipped the whole gear overboard.

But immediately, to her bewilderment, he seized the paddle again, plunged it into the water, began to speed toward the barrier.

The roar of the surf—most frightful of sounds—deafened her. But as she clung desperately to her place, staring ahead into the tumult of waters—she could smile. If Olive chose death to defeat, so could she. But, such her faith, she felt that, impossible as it seemed, he must still think to escape.

Now, as her navigator began to calculate the seas, to hold the canoe back at times, Palmyra saw there was a slight recession shoreward in the line of the reef. It swung in at this point just sufficiently to create a lee. The surf did not burst upon it with the direct drive of the wind and, protected through most of the year from the sweep of the trades, not so much broken coral had been packed down here and the rim was lower. In a flash she perceived that he must have had this place in mind from the first; that, the tide in their favor, it might be possible, in sufficiently skilled hands, to hurdle the reef.

Giving battle to this new foe ahead, she forgot that astern.

The brown navigator watched the waves with calculating eye. He was facing the one spot in all

this coral wall where such an attempt could be made. He would paddle vigorously for a few strokes, then hold the canoe steady on the breast of a sea. He must be ready to carry over the rim at just the right time. To be an instant early, an instant late, would be fatal.

There was just one phase in the rhythm of the surf when he could succeed. He must catch the moment when the wave had crashed down upon the coral teeth; when the violence of the impact had abated, but not one second of the precious after-inrush had been lost. For, if that had not carried him far enough, he would be caught by the recoil to follow, when the water flung upon the reef poured back into the ocean. And, above all, he must not reach the rim in the trough of a sea, or the next wave would hurl the canoe against the rock, grind them to death.

Olive, paddle poised, awaited the stroke. Then, as the next surge picked them up, he sent the canoe straight in with all his might. Almost under Palmyra's feet the wave exploded. Then the green water licked in, with a solid rush that carried them across the edge and upon the reef.

Olive paddled furiously to get far enough in so that the back-sweep could not grip them, drag them down to destruction. Nearly he had succeeded. But, the recoil having drained the coral almost bare, the outrigger struck a knob of the limestone, broke from the canoe.

Instantly, the man leaped out, caught the girl up in his arms. He sprang upon a coral boulder that

raised them above the sliding water. The canoe sucked back over the brink, but Olive held.

The moment the downrush ended, he raced with his burden, bounding over the rough coral, until he had reached another knob rising above the level, perhaps fifty feet in from the edge. Here they weathered the next sea and its subsequent retreat.

Another dash across the shallows and they were safe from the ocean. But not as yet from Ponapé Burke.

As the brown man carried Palmyra, her face, over his shoulder, was turned toward the Lupé-a-Noa. The girl saw that the schooner, beaten at last, had gone about and was working back out of danger. She saw that the white man had clambered part way up the rigging. And then she gave a warning cry as, from the shrouds, there flashed out a spurt of flame.

Instantly, Olive, understanding, threw himself flat into the three-foot water. A bullet came cutting along the surface almost where they had stood. It raised a vertical film like the fin of a dolphin, which grew ever higher until it ended in a spine-like jet where the bullet broke below.

Olive, leaping up, sprang with the girl behind another boulder in time to escape a second bullet.

Several shots Ponapé Burke fired in his jealous rage, though now he had no target. Then, the Pigeon of Noah gaining way, drew off, and the pursuit, in this phase at any rate, was ended.

Briefly, the brown man watched to see if there would be another shot. Then he raised the girl once more and stood grinning after the enemy.

He had staked his life upon the skill of his empty hands. The mighty forces of nature, John Thurston and all the ship's company of the Rainbow, Commander Sakamoto and the Japanese navy, and now—for the time being, at least—Ponapé Burke and the deadly pistols. He had met them all and he had won.

Proudly he stood, in this hour of triumph. Holding in his great arms the prize of victory, *O-lee-vay*, South Sea savage, threw back his head in one mighty shout of laughter.

Then, lifting the girl high, he breasted the deeper water of the boat channel next the beach, and strutted up the sands.



## CHAPTER XL

### THY PEOPLE MY PEOPLE

OLIVE marched proudly up the sands, the girl in his arms a dead burden. Her great hour had come, but nature could do no more. Fatigue, emotion, these had had their way. Hardly could Gabriel's trump itself have roused her from the stupor into which she was sinking.

The rifle fire, as was to have been expected, had brought the villagers running from their thatches. Scarcely had the brown man emerged out of the sea than these Micronesians were swarming down. Excited voices filled the air. "*O-lee-vay—O-lee-vay—O-lee-vay!*"

In countless numbers, as it seemed, they came. They crowded around, calling questions, uttering exclamations; they stood on tiptoe for a look; jumped up, their hands on one another's shoulders, for a glimpse of the strange burden.

Palmyra was aware of these things as a person is aware in fever: the real and the unreal; whimsically in and out, close and afar, silent or clashing with noise; a phantasmagoria of voices and faces—absurd, strange, terrifying.

So this, then, was where he could bring her; the home of his people, the place of his own abode. Through a thousand isles they two had stolen, furtive, whispering as the shadows of the night, that

here now at last, where the great bird had flown on ahead to prepare the way, Olive should carry her in triumph up these sands: to have and to hold until death. . . .

Yes, it was very much as she had expected. He'd brought her across the desert ocean; on, on into the heart of the unknown sea; all beyond and beyond the knowledge of man—to have and to hold.

She moaned and pressed her face close against that protecting shoulder. She wished they would draw back, those leering masks which seemed to project themselves toward her with the speed of birds, only to stop within an inch of her eyes, there to remain, grinning, horribly gleeful. She struggled to get away from them, yet her struggle was visible in no more than the feeble twitching of her fingers. She shut her eyes. They were terrible people, his people. She'd feared they might be so.

When she looked again it surprised her to find she and Olive were in the canoe. She'd thought the canoe had sucked back over the brink, but perhaps that was yesterday. At any rate, there was no mistaking the motion now.

And everywhere, bobbing about as it appeared, was a fleet of boats; queer brown-thatched boats with sharp high-pitched roofs. And above these rose tall palms. . . . No, not palms—masts. But they *did* look like palms: faded white and red, and contorted as if the wind had been too much for them and had bent them—a quaint idea for a mast—in the days when they were young and pliable.

And all around the canoe, in the way of her paddle, getting bumped by the outrigger or the prow, seem-

ing to pay not the least attention to their steps, crowded these friends of the brown man's, walking through the water. They appeared to do it quite easily; giggling and whispering and pointing at her.

She shut her eyes again, but it was no use.

They swarmed about like flies. There was one big one that was much the worst of all. It would get very close indeed, and look at her in such a pitying manner and wail out as if it might say, "Alas, alas!" And this face made her want to cry.

And then morning must have come once more, for everything had been dark. And the canoe, singularly enough, was now on dry land, moving among the trees. She had never known these canoes could be used ashore. But here they sailed straight up a path so shaded she could not see the sun—a thing in itself quite strange. And all the while Olive's friends kept pace with the sailing; ahead, astern, on either side; walking right through the tree trunks and never seeming to notice.

She hadn't expected Olive's island to turn out just such a place. It was decidedly queer. But at least one thing was as she'd foreseen: he carried her quite away and away into the jungle of the mountain tops.

And it was such a large island. They'd sailed up this path now for days. Yet here his friends still kept unflagging pace. Did these never tire?

And then, one morning, right up in the middle of the bush, where you'd least expect it, they came again upon the ocean.

Palmyra marvelled that the sea could look so natural. It was as real as if they'd only cut across some peninsula and had got to the other side. There was

a broad beach of sand, dimpling water with sun flashes upon it, and, to give greater verisimilitude, several vessels riding at anchor, their masts swaying idly back and forth.

Upon the curving sweep of the beach there were houses. And, strangest of all, these were not only the brown thatches of the natives, but—just as she'd seen them pictured—Japanese houses and the houses of tropical Christendom: wooden walled, perched upon cement pillars, roofed with galvanized corrugated iron, their water tanks behind them.

It was very singular to find all this up in the bush where one would have looked for ferns and tinkling rills and the awesome silence of the forest primeval. Yet here were people moving about: brown men, yellow men, white men; the last in white clothing and white shoes, with white pith helmets pulled down over their noses to keep out the glare of the white sand. And here was even a white woman, who popped her head out a window like a cuckoo out of a clock.

And now, in the oddest way, all these people, at one and the same time, appeared to hear Olive's friends, to see Olive with his burden. The brown men threw down their baskets, the yellow men snapped shut their sun umbrellas, the white men whipped the helmets off their noses, to see. The woman popped back into her window and reappeared at the door. And then, as if at a signal, they all began to run.

But here it seemed as if night must again have come down. Yet, though the men had been running violently at dusk, the dark cleared from Palmyra's

eyes to find them in the same spot the daylight had left them, poised, as one might think, on the very same foot.

She did not like having things so at such a time. Once more she shut her eyes wearily. She hid her face against the protecting shoulder and the big salt tears made their slow way down that copper skin. But at last she had to give another look. And there, most astonishing of all, not five feet away and as real as life itself, stood John Thruston.

And he gazed at her sorrowfully and said, in the strangest voice: "Palm Tree! Oh, oh, Palm!"

PART FOUR

WHEN FOUR MEN LOVE





## CHAPTER XLI

### TO SLEEP AND TO TALK

It was not until fifteen hours after the brown man had restored Palmyra Tree to the world of the living that she once more opened her eyes. Then, in a half-waking fright, she reared herself up with a cry of "Olive!"

The next moment she found herself in her mother's arms.

When she roused again, several hours later, the Crawfords were at the bedside with her mother and father.

Palmyra sat up abruptly with the question: "Where have they got Ponapé Burke?"

The four looked from one to another, hesitant.

At her first awakening the girl had been told how the Okayama had brought her people into this harbor on the search

"You, you don't mean . . ." She paused, incredulous. "You don't mean the gunboat was right here when I came and didn't steam out to catch him?"

She saw that this unbelievable thing was true. Unexpectedly, she sprang to her feet. "Where's Olive?" Her voice rang sharp, frightened.

But Olive himself was asleep. The instant he had handed her over to Thurston he had fallen flat. They had thought him ill. But he had only been asleep. And he had not moved a muscle until he had slept the clock around.

Her father began to explain. "The Pigeon of Noah is an American vessel . . ."

"And there's been so much friction between Japan and America," interjected the mother.

"And Commander Sakamoto was sure if he seized the schooner on the high seas it would get into the American papers wrong and stir up more misunderstanding and ill will. . . ."

"So, my dear," finished Constance Crawford, "you were sacrificed to the ends of diplomacy. The Jap, finding you safe, decided the lesser evil was to let Burke escape."

The father began to laugh. "And that the papers, on the other hand, shouldn't say he'd refused aid to an American mother, he took the engine apart before we knew anything about it."

"The Japanese are a tactful people," conceded Mrs. Crawford. "Necessary repairs, postponed because of the chase, grown imperative. And it happened, too, to be the truth."

The mother looked anxiously at her daughter, then picked up from the table a little section of cane which the girl at once recognized. "Speaking of Commander Sakamoto," the elder woman began. "He asked me to present this with his compliments. Thought you might like to have it."

Palmyra took the tube almost timidly. So much had that writing meant to her and so long had she been withheld from an explanation. She drew the paper out slowly and looked at the red markings, with the signature, "I am Olive."

"Dr. Crife's just had a long talk with Olive," said

Mrs. Crawford. Dr. Crife of the mission was their host.

The girl exclaimed in astonishment. "He can, he can talk to him? He can understand him?"

She seemed hardly to believe. So utterly, with her, had the brown man been beyond reach of words, it had seemed no one, with Ponapé Burke gone, could ever bridge that gap between Babel's most diverse languages.

"And to think," cried Constance, "they got the letter all wrong. Made us believe poor Olive, who was being so wonderful, was a villain."

The color flooded Palmyra's cheeks in the intensity of her interest.

"The trouble was," explained Mrs. Tree, "that neither Sakamoto nor the native pastor who brought him the message speak our language at all well."

"Between them," added the father, "they managed to twist the letter quite around."

As the explanation went on the girl saw Ponapé Burke's narrations of a savage Tanna had caused her needlessly to mistrust a people of far different character and development.

Scattered through the field of the Micronesian mission were a hundred native pastors. These pastors and their people not infrequently used the man-o'-war bird as a carrier. Olive had sent out his appeal sure it must fall into the hands of well disposed men.

"But this particular pastor couldn't explain clearly," said the father, "and the Jap, misled by your name, didn't understand at all. What Olive really writes is to beseech, in Jehovah's name, that whatever friends get the letter hurry with arms and

many boats to a named island, there to help him save . . .”

“Dr. Crife says there’s absolutely no question about that word ‘save’,” put in Constance.

. . . “Help him save the high chief young lady Palmtree.”

The girl settled back among her pillows. Tears welled into her eyes. “It was enough that I should have wronged him,” she said. “It is unthinkable you all should have been guilty of this crowning misconception.”

She shifted uneasily, lay for some time in silence, gazing through the window.

“If *they* hadn’t bungled the letter,” she said at last wearily, “I should have been spared much. And if *you* hadn’t let Ponapé Burke escape, I shouldn’t now be in danger still.”

They joined in a chorus of reassurance.

Surely here—in this center whence the American Board, since 1852, had carried on its work for the Gilberts and the Marshalls; in this Protestant stronghold where Japan—in the inevitable taking over to have been expected from any foreign power—would think it best not to step in until the change was complete elsewhere; in this citadel of refuge toward which Olive had fought his way as the one place in all Micronesia where a girl would be most secure—surely here she could feel safe?

High on the slope above the town and the harbor were the buildings of this haven: the school, and the three dormitories intended for the young men and women from the islands of the two coral groups.

Palmyra's troubled face was still toward the window.

Under her gaze there passed a member of the mission staff, stiff starched, capable, benign. Again there came groups of students, stalwart youths holding hands like girls, yet ready—as also the men of this island—to fight to the death in any cause that same starched being thought worthy.

And if these were not enough, Palmyra could see, at the foot of the hill, spreading out between her and Ponapé Burke's ocean, the houses of the friendly Japanese and the few resident whites. And she caught, here and there along the beach, the gleaming uniforms of sailors from the Rainbow and the Gunboat Okayama.

Yes, it would seem that here, if anywhere, a girl might feel safe from one little runt of a man. But still. . . .

She shuddered slightly.

She was like a soldier straight from the trenches. There life itself depended on senses keyed to wild-animal acuteness. For days, weeks, this soldier would start at every sound. Equally, Palmyra had watched for Burke until now she saw that vile face leering at her from every cover. So long as he was free it seemed she could never be at ease again.

"It's all well enough," she began presently, "for you to feel safe. You don't know Ponapé Burke. I *do*."

The father tried to ridicule her fears.

The girl raised herself on her elbow, regarded him fixedly. "If," she demanded, "Burke hadn't meant



to return, why didn't he shoot Olive out of the canoe just before we hurdled the reef?"

They found no ready answer.

"Afterwards," she went on, "yes. He was so enraged he couldn't help it. But when we were so close his aim would have been deadly? Oh," she cried with vehemence, "don't pretend to doubt. He didn't because to have killed Olive then would have been to drown me. And I—was still his."

They were impressed; despite themselves disturbed.

"The man's whole position is at stake," she went on. "He's lived off the natives because it never occurred to them they could resist. But now that one of his own fellows has turned on him, beaten him, Ponapé Burke absolutely *must win*."

She faced once more to the window and its panorama.

On the right there stretched away the cocoanut plantations. To the left a small brisk river hurried into the harbor. Beyond again, she looked down upon a forest of mangrove trees: the green velvet screen under which Mother Nature, most exquisite of housekeepers, hides that sink of the heavenly isles, the salt water swamp—which here encroached upon the town.

"If he were, well just the usual ruffian," she began, "I shouldn't be so much afraid. But he, he's scarcely an American, a white man. He . . ."

She was trying to put into words an idea exemplified for her by those Malay Mohammedans in the

Philippines and elsewhere who deliberately run amok, knowing they will be killed.

To make these things not only possible but easy, such people must be essentially different in their feeling about the hereafter. Theirs must be a strictly physical conception, as opposed to civilization's spiritual conception which, of its very nature, allows but a nebulous glimpse.

These others, their future must be as near and clear to them as looking through an open door from one room into another. Death, indeed—in a continuing, unchanging existence—could be no more than the opening of that door; the passing from the one room into the other; from the dingier to the brighter, but from room to room in the *same* house.

Of the spiritual conception she felt Burke no more capable than a cow. But, if he was limited, he could, by that very circumstance, view those things which did come within his field with a concentration of attention impossible to more highly organized perceptions.

Ponapé Burke had seen these Tannese widows demanding to be strangled that they might spring through the door into the brighter room, there to participate with their master in the feast laid out for his welcome. He had seen them eager to go, seen them die smiling. And he could not forget.

"He has everything to urge him on," Palmyra Tree now resumed. "Pride, position, the Tannan empire, his passion for me. And he has nothing to restrain him: no sufficiently wholesome fear of death. He is pagan. Who knows what he may do, what chances he may take?"

From the decks of the Okayama below there floated up the challenging note of a bugle. And then, as if in answer, they heard from somewhere on the slope above, the voice of the jungle pigeon in his hiding place; always, in the forest silences, so remote, so secret, so eerily disquieting.

The four people, troubled, stared at the girl, then glanced from one to another. Constance Crawford opened her lips as if to speak; desisted when the father made a slight sign of negation.

Scarcely an hour before, the brown man Olive had struggled up out of that stupor which held him dumb, and had sent them this warning:

“Go quickly away. Ponapé is not dead. Ponapé *returns!*”

## CHAPTER XLII

### PRIDE OR COMPASSION?

At last Palmyra could talk to Olive.

After all these days and years and centuries of silence, they two, by the intervention of Dr. Crife, had been made articulate.

During an interval brief in time but great in event this brown islander had so completely dominated her that now Van Buren Rutger and John Thurston seemed, by comparison, almost strangers. Yet, paradoxically, though she knew this Olive so well, she knew him not at all.

He had risen out of the waste of waters, her knight errant against the vile Burke. He should have carried her away and away into the solitudes: he had brought her here to her mother's arms.

She was consumed by a prodigious curiosity concerning him. From the first she had been unable to ask a single question, but now at last voice could answer voice.

Incredibly, across that great gulf fixed between present-day civilization and the stone age, Miss Palmyra Tree of Boston stepped. And, incredibly again, she found the remote intelligence behind that copper mask in no sense remote. For the one unchanging factor in all the ages—from the Sixth Day of Creation down to this Year of our Lord 1924—has been human nature.

The pent interest and gratefulness of the girl burst forth in a flood which swept the missionary, in every unemployed moment, to the house of Olive.

She learned that the brown man served Ponapé Burke in a debt of gratitude; the saving of his life. He had for this white rascal a sort of love, but no sort of respect. Great souls must, of their nature, suffer petty tyranny. And Olive—often, according to his lights, regretting, disapproving, always palliating—followed the despicable little Ponapé.

She learned that Olive had not known Burke meant to abduct her. And she found that in the beginning he had thought it, not an abduction, but an elopement.

Something in the strange fellowship of these two had kept Burke from confiding his purpose. But Olive, on the Rainbow, seeing how much time the girl spent with his master, had concluded her greatly taken with him. And when, at Wreck Island, she came out first and alone, the man at once guessed what that must signify. Naturally, he supposed her a party to the plot.

Olive erred because he had no standards by which to judge the white world. To him all white men and women were more or less incomprehensible. According to his own standards, Ponapé, the master, was powerful, feared, possessed of a store of rich goods, captain of the great ship *Lupé-a-Noa*; a man of wealth and position. Olive might wonder and regret that this girl had returned the love of one so unbeautiful in body and soul. But the brown man was quite incapable of detecting the social incongruity.

Only when the schooner got under way did he perceive that this was no adventure of Palmyra's own choice. Only when she did not soon begin to smile through her tears as many a native girl might have done, did he realize how terrible to her the situation.

Had it not then been too late, he would have tried to save her, even though at that time the crew would have been unquestioningly loyal to Burke. But Ponapé, apparently in some doubt as to how his fastidious henchman might view this latest escapade, had been doubly on the watch. Olive had had to wait until the master himself created an opportunity.

Olive's first thought was that the girl would feel safer with a weapon; also that she might possibly need one. As he dared not give her the knife in daytime, he had dropped it through the skylight.

When the Japanese gunboat passed them so cruelly by, Olive had been as eager as she to attract attention. But he had known the distance too great.

As regarded Jaluit he had not gone there because it was so obviously the place he should have gone. Burke was sure to try that lagoon first. The canoe would have been in constant danger, and even if they had got ashore the mission at that point was now reduced to one lone American woman.

Ponapé, indeed, was misled. Had the bird letter brought response, Palmyra would have been protected by the time he got back on the trail.

Upon one or another of the islands passed there might have been two or three Japanese or even a white man. But Burke had inoculated Olive with his own mistrust and dislike of the Japs. And, in



addition, the islander doubted both the ability and the desire of these rough men, either white or Asiatic, to stand off his determined master. In all the sea there was no safe place except here.

These facts the girl learned easily. But when it came to Olive's motive, there she must grope and conjecture for he himself was dumb.

Here was an unusual man, a most unusual man indeed; not at all typical of native life; in will, tenacity of purpose, more like a white man, and a very determined sort of white man at that. Yet he was still only a native.

This much Dr. Crife could read for her:

Incarnate there before this islander's eyes on the Rainbow, she had been not unlike a goddess; a being—as indeed she was—from another world. A high white princess, called for the stately life-giving palm and crowned with hair of flame, she had condescended to him with blankets when a brown creature was in misery with that most terrible of things—cold.

Olive was not in love with Palm-Tree. One does not consider oneself privileged to fall in love with a goddess. And it would never occur to an islander that he could adore any white woman; much less one so beautiful and high.

But from the deck at her feet, intimately yet a-far, he had gazed up at her—fascinated.

Beyond this point Palmyra could only be left unaided to wonder what would have befallen had she not fetched the blankets, or had she not herself become so piteous an object of woe, or—had she not laughed at the brown man's name.

Would any one of these three alone have sufficed?

Or had it taken the three combined to reach through to that obscure sympathy or pride?

Time and again the girl's mind went back to the Rainbow: her laughing inquiry about the tattooed letters on the massive forearm, Burke's humorous recital, the amused faces and gay comments of the others; and that brown islander there on the hatch shifting uneasily, a thing eloquent, in one so solidly impassive, of acute feeling.

Was it only that she was the most wonderful being in the world and had laughed at his name? Or was it that she was the most wonderful being in the world and was in anguished need?

On the canoe she had thought his overmastering pride demonstrating itself to Ponapé Burke. But now she saw how inevitably it must have been herself. She of all was the one who least should be let to laugh—and she *had* laughed. Olive, in his very real respect for the white man's pistols, must have conceived that this was the one exploit which would establish him, beyond question, in her eyes as a brave and manly man.

Yet though his habit of life was dictated by the fierce pride rising from that curious, rather pathetic resentment of ridicule, your typical islander would have felt such a thing little, if at all. Did not Olive's passionate rebellion prove in him a sensitiveness, a refinement of feeling rare in white or brown alike?

The most wonderful being in the world, her laugh had cut deepest. The heroism evoked measured the sting. But wounded vanity by itself would have taken its payment from her. He would have demonstrated his power, not by saving her, but by enslav-

ing her. Was it then not the fact that his response had risen from something far deeper, sweeter? He himself would have said pride. She was saying compassion.

And now, when Palmyra had reached this point, there came to her at the mission a native boy with a gift of flowers. Dewy fresh they were, with the exception of one leaf that thrust out from among them, still stiffly sword-like, but withered. And the girl found that its surface membrane was scratched and cut into letters with a pin.

Instantly the anguished emotion of that moment rushed back upon her.

"Oh," she cried out in triumph, "it was his great heart!"

## CHAPTER XLIII

### BLACK SHADOW OF PONAPÉ

IF Palmyra now knew how Olive felt toward her, she was far from knowing how she felt toward Olive.

And if her only difficulty with Van Buren Rutger had been a reluctance to give him pain, she found every difficulty with John Thurston.

Van himself had made things easy.

Returning to the mission at a late hour the third night he had come upon Olive prowling about with a rifle. "Ponapé is not dead," the brown man had explained simply. But that which others looked upon as a touching manifestation of devotion, Van chose to regard with suspicion. "Sakamoto shall know of this," was his comment.

Palmyra had been so incensed that, there and then, she had broken the engagement.

Van's dismissal placed him in that position wherein a weak man not infrequently lacks moral courage to turn upon his real rival. He must find an easier target for his resentment. Thus Van, without in the least perceiving why, remained amiable toward Thurston, but developed an ugly spite against this man of darker skin.

Van had had a distaste for Olive ever since the islander had given Palmyra that ring. Now, smarting under the double loss of the girl and of his own self-respect, he allowed this feeling to grow into an unreasonable animosity.

Today Van would be questioning Olive's motive. The brown man had restored Palmyra only because Burke had cornered him in flight, and Olive had been adroit enough to save himself and claim the credit. Or if his motive was originally good, they'd so lauded him since, Palmyra had so hung around him, he'd had his head turned.

Tomorrow Van would be jeering at the possibility of Ponapé Burke's reappearance. Nobody—the people on the beach, the missionaries, the naval officers—expected it. The whole talk had started with Olive himself. He had the girl hypnotized; was playing on her fears.

Ultimately Van was able to back this last opinion with the testimony of one Martin, newly arrived from another island where Burke was positively known to have passed, headed out of the mandate forever.

But if Palmyra had freed herself of Van, she could not free herself of that which withheld her from Thurston.

Back there in the canoe, in her moment of revelation, she had yearned to meet him once more, face to face, that she might tell him the truth. But now that, astonishingly, she had awakened into the old life, she found herself quite unready to step up to him with any such confession.

She willed to love John Thurston; she did love John Thurston. But between them was the brown man Olive, and, leering from behind his elbow, the face of Ponapé Burke.

Concerning Olive she tried to justify herself on the ground of gratitude. Never had a girl more

reason to be grateful. Was it not natural she should be eager to take him presents, to sit in his house questioning, to find herself hour by hour more curious concerning him, more interested in him than in any other living being?

Oddly enough—or rather, naturally enough—it did not come to her for some time to ask whether she might be in love with this brown man. Then the idea struck like an unexpected blow. She was stunned.

At first she put the thought from her in abhorrence. But in the still hours of the night it came back again and again. Could she indeed be in love with Olive? Was it possible for an American girl, under any circumstances whatever, to fall in love with a man of darker race?

She shuddered to think others might believe this thing of her.

She avoided Olive, kept to her room. She struggled to analyze her emotions, to weigh them dispassionately. And, honestly striving, she was at last able to say of herself that, in no sense, could she be accused of loving him.

Yet—waking or asleep; in his own house, or away among her friends or here alone—he dominated her.

Not for long did she find the answer. Then it came like release from a prison cell. She was in love, not with Olive himself, but with his attributes. He fascinated her as the exemplification of physical strength, mental alertness; of that knowledge and skill which enables one to perform miracles in the face of death.



She loved strength, courage, resourcefulness—and Olive had made her love.

In the canoe it was her dawning appreciation of these things which caused her first to mistrust Van Buren Rutger. Only as she grew in admiration for Olive's power of instant decision and infallible action was she capable of realizing the strength of John Thurston.

But, how entangling the web of circumstance. Without Olive she would never have understood. And with Olive she could not avail herself of that understanding. The brown man—oh, perverse fate—had brought her back to Thurston, yet kept her from him.

She wanted to love John for the true manliness that was his. But, alas, those splendid qualities the two possessed in common had come to seem the personal qualities of Olive alone.

Each day she started out to bestow the laurel of her heart upon Thurston and each day vivid recollection deflected her to the house of Olive. For it was this brown man, and only this brown man, she had seen, time after time, spring into the jaws of death and out again, carrying her to safety.

And Ponapé Burke was still free to try again!

Olive had so been as providence to this girl that now she could feel safe with no one else. Her intellect told her others would protect. But the fact remained that, with the first returning of Burke, only Olive *had* arisen to save. And now, in the fear of a second returning, she seemed bound to her islander by a power stronger than her will. If Ponapé could have been eliminated, this hysteric

chain would not have held her fast. With time, body and mind would have outlived this legacy of terror and she could have turned to the man of her choice.

But the Lupé-a-Noa still sailed the seas.

Palmyra threw herself down on the little iron bed in her mission room and sobbed bitterly. Was ever a girl so circumstanced? She wanted to love John Thurston—splendid big John—and she could not—now or ever.

So long as they remained in the islands, she would be bound to Olive by these shackles of fear. And once they were safe away, she would not have seen John fighting for her, saving her against all odds, as she had seen this other.

She would have given him her heart—but Ponapé Burke held the key.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### A MAT AND A NET

THE sun was less than an hour high when Palmyra, as she had done for several mornings now, descended the winding stairway hewn in the hillside from the mission direct to the street of the town.

Island life was already astir.

Here stalked a Ponapean dandy with tattooed hands and broad stripes parallelling up his legs in snakelike effect; there a Kusaiean, innocently annihilating a creditable attempt at civilized man's attire, by a pink celluloid comb in his hair.

Next, there came in order, two women of the somewhat small local race, smug in the *holoku*, the Mother Hubbard dress which, throughout the Pacific, is more or less the outward sign of spiritual grace; a burly fierce-faced Gilbertine; a Korean coolie from the sugar plantation; a German trader, lifting pith helmet with the one-two snap of the soldier; an old man of the Marshalls, his withered body embroidered over with inked patterns which once had been gay, but now remained only a faded blue in the worn fabric of the skin.

A group of children had gone by, already chattering in Japanese, and then Palmyra saw the straggling procession hesitate, back off the road, bow low. It was a Japanese official; white starched, brass buttoned, gold epaulettes, besworded. Not a major,

this; only the school teacher. But Nippon has insisted, even to the rod, on obeisance to officers all.

Following this militant master, as in a ribald competition in dignity, there came trotting a big roast pig. Not on his own legs did he trot, but upon the legs of four native men who carried him, ostentatiously, perched on two poles across their shoulders. The festal beast rode with an expression high, serene, as a mandarin in a chair. His face seemed new-shaven, as befitted one going out to dinner, and over each ear, in the fashion of some islands, he wore a flaring hibiscus flower.

Coincidentally with the pig there lounged along the white man Martin that Van Buren Rutger had quoted. Curiosity, as often, attached to him for a trivial reason. Where all must come by ship, he had come without. Questioned, he had sheepishly admitted to having made himself so objectionable aboard a British barque that her skipper had marooned him on the opposite side of the island. Thence he had walked around to the settlement.

Palmyra now turned to this Martin with a question concerning the pompous pig.

"Cook 'em in an oven of hot stones—whole," explained the man. "Native feast down the coast late today. Every village's got to take a pig."

He went lounging along and presently the girl was addressed by an old woman.

"Pleasey you," said this crone in English, "you come for look for see ve'y fine Pingelap mat. You like too much for buy."

Palmyra smiled. The woman appeared as old as the Sphinx, yet her teeth seemed dentist-new.

"Pleasey you," wheedled this creature, "you come my 'ouse for look-see. O-lee-vay he speakey me you come."

The girl laughed. If she were to believe these natives there was not a curio along the beach Olive did not wish her to buy.

Yet, despite the laugh, she scrutinized the old woman narrowly, glanced up and down the road in a flash of that wild-animal alertness.

She would have refused, but now she caught a glimpse of Van approaching. Several times he had trapped her into painful interviews. But this morning she could use the ancient dame, as a gaping listener, to keep Van silent.

"Where is your 'ouse?" the girl asked tentatively.

In a settlement such as this, the homes and trading establishments of the Japanese and the whites face the beach, to form one long curving street. In between these buildings the native thatches here and there intrude by ones or twos. Immediately inland of the foreign dwellings the native village crowds and, close behind that in turn, the banana and coconut plantings, or the bush itself.

The thatch toward which the crone pointed stood conspicuously. Immediately against one side was the water and a small wharf of coral fragments by which the traffic of the town went to the anchorage. As close on the inland side was the road and, opposite, the trading establishment of a white man and the high concrete wall of the Japanese police compound. The house was quite by itself on the water side of the highway, yet immediately in the center of village life.

Van now came sauntering up and Palmyra indicated this place.

"Come on," she invited. "My old lady is taking me for look-see for ve'y fine *Pingey*-something mat."

Several drops of rain fell.

Van agreed. "But there's a squall coming," he said. "I'll run back first for umbrellas."

As he turned away she hesitated, unexpectedly afraid at being left alone.

But as she moved forward a Japanese policeman, saluting benignly, reassured her. And she saw every step brought her nearer those two representatives of the civil and the moral law, which lay at anchor beyond the wharf, the Okayama and that Iju Ran which is the latest, perhaps the last, of the Morning Stars in which the American missionaries have carried the Word.

The old woman's house was not only conspicuous in location but in appearance. The thatches of this island were rectangular, sharp roofed, sided with woven *tat*, narrow doored. But this hut was oval and open—vaguely the architecture of central Polynesia.

Somewhere at hand, Palmyra had been told, there was a whole village of thatches more or less like this. In Oceanica one not infrequently comes upon communities alien to the local race: as the island of Nukuoro in mid-Carolines, for instance, still today speaks the Maori Samoan which belongs two thousand miles away. And such a settlement was here; largely fused by now in blood and speech; yet maintaining an externality by attracting to itself whatever island wanderers happened ashore, and retaining



outlander arts and customs, among these something of its structural tradition.

As Palmyra now neared the old woman's house she bethought herself of that humorous figure concerning the privacy of a goldfish. For this hut was no more than a dome of thatch, the eaves raised shoulder high on a circle of posts, above a pebble floor. Walls, partitions, there were none. From the eaves hung bundles of woven leaf blinds, to be lowered in case of storm, but normally raised; so that the life of the family, almost of the entire village, might be seen in one intimate glance. But, so in the midst of things this particular home, the public stare must have irked even the native, for three of the twelve blinds had been dropped.

The girl stooped to enter, then drew back in one of those sudden apprehensions that still beset her. Who knew where Ponapé Burke would strike? This house seemed safe; might indeed be safer than the mission. But yet . . .

She peered in; saw only three old women. No one could be in hiding, none approach without being seen.

Palmyra entered, advanced toward the central posts, glanced interestedly around.

In such a house there is no furniture. The floor mats serve alike as chairs and bed. Your islander has adopted only the white man's mosquito bed-net—*tainom* in the Marshalls, *tei amu che* in the eastern Carolines. Usually folded away at sunrise, this sleeping net, as it happened here, still hung down to the floor. The girl marvelled that the enclosed section of big bamboo with its little legs could really

be a pillow. She feared that the coarse bobbinet would prove a somewhat stuffy canopy.

She was about to turn with a question concerning the Pingelap mat, when, suddenly, something dropped past her eyes, and the three old women hurled themselves at her.

So unexpected the attack from such as these, in an open shed such as this, at almost the settlement's busiest and most public spot, that the girl was caught unready. And before she could move a muscle, cry out, her throat was compressed—a terrible, choking pressure. She fought for breath. Then, her arms pinioned, came relief and a fierce warning: "No 'peakey, no 'peakey!" At the moment of the onfall, her guide, still behind her, had dropped round her throat a fibre loop, a brutal tourniquet with which she could, instantly, be strangled into silence—or death.

The women, fearing Van might soon arrive, prepared to take their prisoner immediately away.

At first Palmyra thought this impossible.

But now she made a discovery. Though the thatch was so notoriously to the forefront as to seem above suspicion, the high wall of the police compound ended directly opposite, and turned inland, leaving between it and the blank wall of the trader's a three-foot lane. This path, she recollected being told, ran back for half a mile, a mere passageway between the wall and the mangrove swamp upon which she had looked down from her mission window.

And the mouth of that hidden path was no more than twenty feet distant.

The four women, though shrunken with age, pos-

sessed the strength of daily labor among the yams and taro. And, with that devilish thing around her throat, chokingly tight now and ready instantly to clamp down on her windpipe, one of them alone could have held her silent, helpless.

Until an alarm had been given the people would be unsuspecting. The French trader across the way had locked up his place and gone out to breakfast. The native passersby were coming in detached groups. Palmyra's captors need wait only until no one was near. Then, closing round her, they could whisk her across, screening her with one or two of the ever-present umbrellas, raised either against a shower or the equatorial sun.

Once under cover of the wall, the girl could be hurried away along the lane and into the bush without observation.

But almost at the moment of the sortie there came an interruption. One of the old women, stooping down to glance out, discovered the girl's father and mother and Constance Crawford approaching—already close. Panic ensued. If her captors had not been dangerous before, they certainly were now.

The prisoner would have screamed. Unconsciously, she extended her lungs to take in the necessary air. But, on the second, that fibre cord cut deep into her flesh. Once more she fought for the breath of life. And then, as before, relief, and that same fierce whisper: "No 'peakey, no 'peakey!"

The women must now hide their captive.

Gasping, she was thrust under the mosquito net; thrown flat, head on bamboo pillow. Two of the hags followed her into the netting, sat pressed

against her on either side. These snatched off her hat and veil, threw over her a covering.

Meanwhile the crone who had lured her here had taken a machete and seated herself on the patch of grass before the house. Nonchalantly, as the parents and Constance idled beside a stump of mast not a dozen feet away, she lighted a leaf-wrapped cigarette and then, as the South Sea islander mows his lawn, began to hack at the grass.

Within the house, Palmyra's two guardians had begun a low-voiced singing. She perceived herself as a sick woman. These two kindly old souls sat inside the net to comfort her, while, before the hut, a third waited ready to answer solicitous inquiry. And any commotion of struggle which might catch the transient eye would be taken for a round of that massage which is the native's cure-all.

## CHAPTER XLV

### ROUSE THE BEACH!

HAD it not been for that fibre round her throat, almost making her eyes pop out, Palmyra would have found it difficult to think seriously of an imprisonment which held her—the wharf immediately upon the one hand, the road upon the other—quite visible to any passerby.

Her captors had taken impish advantage of that trait in human nature which causes man never really to look at a thing in plain sight. The burglar ferrets out diamonds in a mattress, but misses them on the table with a soiled handkerchief tossed over them.

The very openness of her hiding place concealed her. Who would look where there was no cellar, no garret, no closets; no household impedimenta, no draperies to obstruct the view? And who would think that a white girl could be disguised as a native? In the Orient there would have been the Mohammedan face veil, the voluminous silks and linens; in colder climes, the drooping hat brim, the high fur collar. But here no wraps, no head coverings; nothing beyond Mother Hubbard or Mother Nature.

At first it seemed to the girl that father or mother or Constance must immediately discover her. But, almost within hand clasp, they refused to look in at her, continued to gaze up and down the road for her.

The old women muttered in fear. One dropped an

additional leaf blind at the back. To have lowered others would have been to make the house conspicuous.

Mrs. Tree spoke anxiously. "I wonder where Palmyra is?"

"She's perfectly safe here," reassured the father.

The mother glanced along the road again. "I'd feel better," she said, "if the Okayama's engines were not still out of commission."

The father laughed easily. "With daughter safe ashore, the engine doesn't figure," he said. "And you know"—patting his side significantly—"we're on the watch." He was carrying a heavy naval revolver.

Meanwhile the prisoner herself was suffocatingly warm. Even without the cotton cover, and the two women pressing against her, she would, in this climate, have suffered for wearing her plaid raincoat.

But she was intensely alert. At the slightest opportunity she meant to scream, to fight. Since her escape from Burke she herself had carried a small automatic pistol. At the first chance she'd use it.

She realized by now that those three out there would not discover her. She must attract *their* attention—even though the attempt might, in the panic of the old women, mean death. For, absolutely, she could be murdered here in her parents' very sight—and they serenely unaware.

Finally, at the mother's suggestion, the three turned to seek further along the street.

Palmyra nerved herself for a desperate lunge.

Now, however, she saw Van Buren Rutger ap-



proaching, and sank back again. The others had not known. Van did know.

But just as the trio had strolled away and the newcomer almost reached the house, here, unexpectedly, was the man Martin. He ran up to Van. Excitedly he spoke.

"Say, mister. . . . Your lady friend. That red-headed girl."

Van drew back stiffly. "Miss Tree is in this house," he said.

Martin was vehement. No, that she wasn't! Outlaw natives had her. Hurrying her away.

Van stared, incredulous, yet alarmed.

"I got it straight," cried Martin. "There's twenty of 'em or more—all with guns. And they're running her for the Pueliko Rocks."

The Rocks were a noticeable formation not far inland.

All Van's suspicions of the brown man burst forth in the one cry: "Olive!"

"Sure," affirmed Martin. "That's him. He's bossing the job. They say he's after her this time for himself."

Van uttered a groan. He tried to meet the emergency. But he could only stare at the other in agitation.

Palmyra, seeing, hearing, burned with contempt.

The stranger now took the initiative. "I'll warn the Japs," he said. "You run for the mission. Remember—the Pueliko Rocks."

But at this moment here came John Thurston. He was jumping up to the wharf from a boat. At sight of him Van's face lighted with relief. Auto-

matically, the weaker man, in his fear for the girl they both loved, was acknowledging the strength of his rival. He ran to John, burst out with the catastrophe.

Instantly, Thurston began to throw off his white coat.

"Olive? Nonsense!"

"I tell you," Van affirmed shrilly, "she's in love with the damned kanaka and he, he's got her."

Thurston thrust Van aside impatiently. "The Pueliko, you say?" he demanded of the man Martin.

Then, the black and white pebbles and shells on the wharf crunching, spinning from under his feet, he sprang toward the house wherein Palmyra lay. For one moment the girl thought he had seen her. She tried to cry out, she fought desperately. But she achieved no more than a muffled croak, a single convulsion of the netting. Thurston neither saw nor heard. His purpose had been to snatch the machete from the hands of the old woman.

Across the road a horse stood saddled. Thurston ran to it, jerked the reins free, jumped into the saddle. Something of his excitement, his spiritual urge, communicated itself to the horse, which reared and pawed the air.

The girl's father, returning at this moment, came running up.

"Rouse the beach," cried Thurston. "You, Van—the gunboat. Martin—the police. Tree—you to the mission. I'm for the Pueliko."

He whirled his horse.

"Wait, wait, Thurston," implored the father. "Here, take my revolver."

"Rouse the beach and follow," came the answer, above the ring of hoofs.

For a moment the three stood, petrified, staring after him. Then they ran, in different directions, to carry out his orders.

Scarcely had they gone than two native men burst from the narrow footway and crossed to the thatch. A few seconds later, with the old women, they had rushed Palmyra over the road and into the lane between the high blind wall and the salt-water marsh, where there were no eyes to see save those of the crabs that ran, in eccentric fashion, back and forth across the slime.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### WHILE MOMENTS COUNT

WITH the clatter of John Thurston's departure still in his ears, Van Buren Rutger ran down the wharf, jumped into Thurston's boat and was pulled to the Okayama.

As soon as Commander Sakamoto was in possession of the fact, that officer rushed landing parties ashore to scour the bush.

Then he turned to Van. "But my dear Mister," he said, "somesing is—wrong. How can *O-lee-vay* have taken the young lady when *O-lee-vay* is locked up here safe aboard?"

Van stared in astonishment, then gripped the other's hand delightedly. But he was puzzled.

The Japanese made an impersonal gesture. "It is—you," he said. "You beg me arrest this man. Your sus-pects, as American gentleman—very important. So I order. You caught him in mission with gun. Now we—find him not an hour ago again with gun."

Van was calculating elapsed time. "Then Martin must have heard just before you nabbed him," he said.

"It is a bad strange thing," resumed the officer, "how these natives can still hide rifles taken from Spanish soldier so many years ago. And when *O-lee-vay* makes himself for a policeman it is bad thing too. But he—sat-isfy me he is only afraid for

young lady. He means good. So I let him go, unless you . . ."

Van was aghast. "Absolutely, no!" he cried.

Sakamoto shrugged. "As you say," he conceded. "But anyhow, we shall question him?"

He gave an order and shortly the brown man appeared on deck with two guards and an interpreter.

Olive must have divined on whose demand he was held.

At sight of him Van's animosity flamed up. The white man sprang forward. "What have you done with her?" he demanded. Then, turning to the interpreter: "What has he done with her?"

Olive seemed at a loss.

"Don't pretend you don't know she's been taken!" Van raged.

At the translation the islander became suddenly alive with excitement. He shot forth a question, received his answer, burst into a flood of entreaty. He thrust his face close to the interpreter's; reached out, unconsciously, and clutched Commander Sakamoto's arm as if somehow physically to help him understand.

"He say," repeated the interpreter, "he say turn him loose. He savvy too much. Go look see. Find girl dam' too much quick."

The Japanese turned questioningly to Van.

"No!" cried the white man passionately. "No!"

The officer shrugged again.

If Palmyra herself had been there, she would have marvelled that Van could remain blind to the sincerity of Olive's purpose.

As for the islander, he must have adjudged the situation hopeless. With a final look of dumb pleading, he whirled, ducked past his unready guards and the clutching fingers of the others, and sprang over the starboard rail, foot first into the sea.

As Olive struck the brine Sakamoto leaped for the gangway and into his cutter, which happened to be alongside.

Now, you will say that a man in open water a long quarter mile from shore would have no chance. But you will be thinking of a white man; most probably of the sort that is publicly drowned on July 4th from an overturned canoe, by the weight of his shoes and the silver change in his pockets. But, in the South Seas, one walks or one swims first, accordingly as one does or does not crawl off the land. Also, there are no shoes or pockets, and a kilt of cotton print does not hinder in the least, nor does it give any hold for a boathook.

"Come aboard, you!" ordered the officer, first in Japanese and then in English. "Stand by, Oki, to grab his hair."

But Olive, emphatically, did not wish to come aboard. Down he sounded like a fish, with a flop of his toes in the very hands of Oki.

Followed an expectant wait, during which the head of the fugitive did not appear.

When a man is lying along your keel, with his nose up close under the fat bulge of your planks, it is not apparent at once just where he has gone. When the sailors finally found Olive, they made a clutch, and one of them nearly went by the board. But the amphibian wriggled away.



"Jab him with an oar," ordered the commander. But it is not so easy to jab with a long oar.

As is well known, a man on foot can run away from a horse, if there are enough turnings. Equally, a man in the water can come about much more easily than a heavy naval cutter under headway. A few free strokes and a breath or two, then down you go, deep under the prod of the boathook and the sweep of the oars, then up again athwart the course. This you repeat until you reach your objective, resting under the keel as required. It is perfectly simple, but close work.

Olive made a judicious feint, dived back under the vicious thrust of the port oars, and splashed ashore. The sailors floundered close in wake.

The chase went on. Olive led into the maze of clotheslines and trailing limbs and sprawling roots and barbed wire and stiles and stones and thatches and bewildering pathways. The boat crew ran in, a Japanese policeman and some idlers, volunteers on horseback pounded away to head the hunt.

Inland, the main road from the beach was crowding in against the river. Soon the fugitive must cross one or the other in the open. He would be seen. He would be caught.

But . . .

Olive did not cross the road. He did not cross the river. Nor was he caught. Merely—he disappeared.

Sailors came closing in from along the waterway, horsemen beating back a-foot. Men of the boat's crew rushed panting up. They worked in from all sides.

"We were upon him like dog on cat," complained the Japanese coxswain. "He must hide himself in these three huts."

A sailor's jacket was torn, his flesh scratched. "Could a bird hide in a cage?" he sneered. "Then, no more in those huts. Try the treetops."

Commander Sakamoto arrived. Since everyone was agreed the place had been surrounded, the fugitive must still be there. The officer set pickets so that escape would be an impossibility. He searched every thatch, tree, bush, rock. But he found no one.

He ordered a score of pickets to remain. "The man is here," he said. "Watch. And shoot him only in the leg."

The commander departed and time passed. But—no Olive.

Yet the officer had been right. Since Olive could not have gone on, he must, perforce, have remained. And there, sure enough, he had lain all the while, in the river, down among the crowding water plants, only his nose up for air.

Normally the water, clear as dew, would have revealed him. But rain in the mountains, tropically copious, had raised the stream out of its banks, stained it earthy brown, dotted its surface with moving leaf and branch.

And now, as Olive is thus held, pause to consider what would have been the emotions of Palmyra Tree could she have looked back from the salt-water morass upon these events in their happening.

Here she would see that of two men who truly love her, the white and the brown, each doing his uttermost to save her, the first has snatched the

second—on guard with a rifle—from this very swamp trail immediately before her passage; has, indeed, by that removal set the whole plot in motion.

While seconds are counting in her fate, she would see Olive vainly pleading: Olive who alone of all—as the only one who knows Ponapé Burke has used this mangrove waste before—could instantly have set forward to her rescue.

And, as the eyes of the Japanese sentries seek the brown man, motionless in hiding, his nose up under the tendrils of the water *aiak*, her own eyes would be shrinking from the bloated and leering face of Ponapé Burke himself.

In tragic mirth she might even have laughed at this blind futility of human intent which had given Van so complete, though unwitting, a revenge. For by now she knew that only elapsing minutes were to tell whether she would be saved—or lost forever.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### A RIDE AND A WALK

MEANWHILE, John Thurston, putting his horse to a run, had soon neared the Pueliko Rocks.

The road, for a way, had been arched with the interlacing feathers of the palms, paved with that same pattern in the black and white of equatorial sun and shadow. As horse and rider plunged forward they had instantly been striped over by those jet markings like zebra or tiger.

Then Thurston flashed past a clump of bamboo, wild growing poinsettia in a dell, and, to the right, the Pueliko loomed: lava upreared in mass; seen through swarms of fleeting leaves beguilingly; dangerously, in that these might cloak a score of levelled rifles.

"Rush 'em single handed," Thurston kept repeating. "That's the hope. Kanaka like, they may scatter if they can. Cornered, they'd fight like demons."

He did not stop to reconnoitre. Heading his excited animal straight for the place, he galloped up the branching path, in among the rocks. Then he drew rein.

No one in sight.

He forced his horse on to the turn. No one there. He jumped off, clambered to the top of a rock whence he would have a panoramic view.

Still no one.

This mass, once molten, had cracked into blocks, curiously alike. Shaken, scattered by upheaval and earthquake, these still remained piled, methodical in tier; seeming less a work of nature than some mountain of quartermaster's casks and boxes. A formation so noticeable there could be no doubting it as the designated point.

"Can they have changed their plans?" Thurston wondered. "Or—" his eyes narrowed thoughtfully—"could anyone have wanted to get me out of the way?"

A shoulder of basalt still blocked the view ahead. He clambered up, had almost reached the top. Then, startlingly, the whistle of a bullet.

Thurston ducked behind a rock. "Meaning me?" he questioned.

He raised his head cautiously. Bang! A leaf cluster came fluttering, like a wounded bird, to his feet.

Across the road, opposite, a great *aio* tree dominated the bush behind it. From among its many trunks a wisp of white smoke had floated out.

John, in his effort to locate the enemy, risked standing up. A third bullet flattened itself against the rock.

"Seems they *are* here, after all," he conceded.

He could look down upon and over the growth backing the *aio*. A fissure in front would keep him from making a direct attack. But through the foliage beyond a native path angled up to join the road a little inland. By this path he could take the enemy in flank and rear.

Regaining his horse he had galloped back to the road, with this turning movement in view, when he encountered the girl's father and seven other men. These were an advance guard. Sailors from the gunboat were following in to scour the bush.

"The lava caves," the father cried excitedly. "High in the mountains, Thurston, inland of here. Unexplored, inaccessible; a terrible hiding place. My God, John, we've got to head 'em off from the caves."

Thurston told of the shooting.

The men scattered, to work in singly, fire a signal when contact with the abductors had been established.

Thurston chose that quarter whence he had been attacked. He had spent much of his leisure time in the Canadian woods among Indians on the hunt, and had made a study of their art. And he felt now that this woodcraft should give him the advantage.

He moved, therefore, into the flanking path with an assured caution, tied his horse, advanced with a rifle the father had brought him. He doubted anyone was still in cover. But he hoped to pick up a trail which might lead to the girl.

Now that he was down amidst the seething growth, the air was all at once still, wet; such as the orchid room of a conservatory imitates. The other eight men had been swallowed by the jungle. But for the distant sound of surf it would have seemed that the outer world had ceased to be.

Behind his assailant's position Thurston found what he sought—footprints.

Native men almost never wore shoes; then only



shoes of cloth and rubber. But here, in the damp mould, someone had ascended toward the *aio* tree, descended—wearing leather.

Thurston examined the prints at length. Then, "If I'm any sort of Indian at all," he commented, "this was—Ponapé Burke."

At the *aio* he learned that his antagonist had used revolver cartridges, American made.

Back on the path, the trail was, at first, easy to follow. Where only naked feet had preceded, the leather heels were distinct.

For a distance Thurston was able to ride. Then lava, clean washed, a stream, and three paths intersecting at the water. The enemy might have taken any one of four trails which went on from here.

It was well for Palmyra that she could not know what difficulties her lover had now to meet.

The bed of this stream, cast solid in one piece from nature's furnace, would have provided a test for the North Woods skill of any man. And in addition, Ponapé Burke—if it were he—had taken pains to leave no mark.

Thurston worked feverishly back and forth.

Insects swarmed and stung; lizards scurried among fallen leaves with startling sound; from somewhere, close at hand or afar, the jungle pigeon sent his sly taunt.

Nearby, a giant of the bush towered to a full hundred and fifty feet. Yet it was not growing into the lava, but set down upon it, almost as a floor lamp stands beside a piano. Sunshine gleamed beneath the massive trunk, all the substance of which had been drawn into buttresses that slanted out, to end

in roots, round, thick through as Thurston's thigh, reaching away over the stone like the tentacles of an octopus, seeking chink and crevice into which they might grip.

As Thurston stood, baffled, mopping sweat from brow and neck, he stared up at this giant. *Talik*, the bird's nest fern, peeked back at him from its branches and lianas hung looping down. Thurston's glance descended the trunk, with its unkempt fur of parasitic plants, advanced along that buttressed root which came crawling, perhaps forty feet, to cross one of the trails just in front of him.

As his eyes reached the path he uttered an exclamation, sprang forward, stooped. There on the smooth rind was a scratch. The man's experience told him it had been made by a nailed heel.

This footway, which had seemed the least likely of the four, Thurston now followed. As he picked up the prints again, the sound of surf warned him the trail was marching toward the sea. As he went forward riding or leading his horse, the path gradually descended into taro flats and then the tidal swamp.

Here *Ak*, the mangrove, revelled in a slime from which all clean trees fled. Here, raised above tide level on roots horrifically like the legs of a gigantic spider, roots strangely animal, naked, repulsive, this thing crowded round the path in such numbers that these legs were interlocked in one inextricable tangle.

The way was at places helped by cocoanut logs thrown down, again by stepping stones. Churning feet had worked it into a paste. Only at the higher points did the leather shoes leave definite indication.

Fortunately, though the tide was in, the rise was, at this stage of the moon, a minimum.

Leading the floundering animal, Thurston worked through a long stretch, only to find, with firmer ground, that the footprints were missing. There had been no branching off. On each side—water. Yet the trail was gone.

A few yards further on it reappeared: three sets of prints this time; going and coming.

Could Palmyra have been with John Thurston now, as she had been with Olive in the canoe, she must equally have acknowledged and admired her lover's skill.

A careless print, angling off at the side of the trail, gave him his clue. A glance showed mud on the nearest mangrove root. The enemy, then, had left the path some distance back, crawled out across the interlocking roots, rejoined the footway where Thurston now stood. And this was the second such excursion.

Why?

John tied the horse once more, swung off over those straddling roots.

At times he need only stoop, again he must crawl. The footing was slippery, yielding. The rifle impeded him. But the way was plain; marked by discoloration or bruise or telltale scratch.

Some hundred yards out, he found footprints again—shod and bare. Ahead large trees told of dry land.

Thurston advanced stealthily, rifle ready. The elevation took on an unusual form. He recognized it, to his surprise, as an artificial island; one of those

ruined fortresses or tombs built by prehistoric conquerors on such islands as Kusaié and Ponapé.

Could the girl be imprisoned here?

He approached with greater caution, bent aside a screening bough, suppressed an exclamation.

Opposite, there rose a twenty-foot wall of basaltic columnar blocks; hexagonal as if forged under a steam hammer, ponderous, long; brought from some such place as the Pueliko on the sea front; transported, lifted by unknown means, for a purpose now only to be guessed.

But it was not at this wall that John Thurston looked.

Lying under it, in what had been either the canal by which these long stones were floated in, or a dock for the *praus* or *junks* of the conquerors, was the schooner Lupé-a-Noa.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### AGAIN—TANNA

WHEN Palmyra's captors hurried her into the footway they did not long continue in the dangerous direction of the Pueliko. Shortly they turned into a path that branched out among the mangroves. This path would bring them circuitously back to the sea at a point just outside the harbor entrance.

Here the land along the ocean rose into what was, at high tide, an islet, separated from the tidal swamp by water of unfordable depth except where the trail struck across a shallow. Perhaps an acre and a half in area, this rim of land supported that alien village of which the house on the beach had been an outpost.

As the girl slipped and stumbled over broken coral thrown into the mud in some futile effort at improvement, she was asking herself again and again: Will Olive hear in time?

As the two men urged her along she knew she must soon confront Ponapé Burke. Yet it was with a gasp that, at a turning, she saw the leaf wall move and the man's face come leering out.

Burke stood for a moment, gloating, his brow wreathed in greenery as with the victor's laurel. Then he bent aside the undergrowth and stepped into the trail.

"Well, Palmie," he tittered, "I come back t'get my kiss."

Her guards now for the first time releasing her hands, the girl snatched forth her pistol and levelled it at him.

An instant he stood crestfallen. Then he summoned once more that admiring mirth. "Gad!" he cried. "A wife fit for any man. Fair born, I'll say, for Tanna."

He was dressed, absurdly, in the gala attire of the Rainbow, even to the cane. She had not ordered, "Hands up!" but he had obeyed that formula, stood thus grinning at her. Now, however, so suddenly she could not pull the trigger, he brought the flexible stick down with whiplike cut across the back of her hand. The fingers, paralyzed, dropped the weapon.

An ugly light flashed into his eyes. "I ain't a-taking no chances this time," he explained.

As they moved forward again Ponapé Burke became informative. Had been lying low here waiting an opportunity. This village was a good sort: not like the rest of the island—so dam' pious a kanaka wasn't supposed even to smoke. And from the point, a man could watch the Okayama at anchor or get away, quickly and unseen, to the hidden Lupé-a-Noa.

The one obstacle had been Olive. But they had discovered Van's antipathy; planned to get the islander out of the way through him. Gratuitously, Van had acted of his own accord.

For this work the man Martin had been useful, being new to the beach, unknown.

"Palmie, my mate, you'll like my Mate Martin," tittered Ponapé Burke. "Used t'pal with him in



Sydney. After y'left me, I runs a-foul o' him. Dead anxious t'get a berth, being wanted for ball and chain. And, *alofa tele mai*, he'll be a real help t'us, once he gets hep t'island ways and savvies some o' the lingo."

As Burke's prisoner would soon have been missed, he himself had given the alarm—to "lay 'em on the right course." Hence the Pueliko Rocks and the lava caves. Hence, also, the shots he had fired at John Thurston, not to wound, but to send the chase with renewed vigor inland.

The man was hilarious.

"Until now," he explained, "I had t'trust t'bribing the chiefs into a *tabu* that'd keep the kanakas from crossing over where they might blab. But now, Olive's locked into the brig, and all hands else is hull down for them lava caves, leaving me free o' the beach. With the tide just past the flood, we'll soon have the old Pigeon clear. The Okayama can't steam a knot and that two-masted ketch o' the mission, the Iju Ran, can't overhaul us. Wireless maybe could tell Paris, but it can't find any craft along the Line t'pick us up." He cackled delightedly. "So, y' red-headed queen o' the cannibal isles, we'll be laying our course agin for Tanna—as per schedule."

At the sea front the native men lifted Palmyra and Ponapé Burke and waded with them through the thigh-deep water to the islet.

As the party splashed ashore and started in among the thatches that straggled the length of this shred of land, naked infants swarmed toward them; banana stomachs, diagonally protuberant, wobbling under

satiny skins. A girl on a mat lay asleep, one arm encircling a portly porker. A fisherman, rinsing sea-salt from his body with rain water caught in a canoe, paused to stare, cocoanut shell in hand. A young mother, interrupting hungry flies, drove them from her infant's orbs that he might gaze upon a white woman. From the houses men hurried out, stood to salute in manner affable rather than military, fell in behind in ever-growing retinue.

At the end of the islet furthest from shore, Ponapé Burke ordered his prisoner into the last thatch. She hesitated, gave the natives one despairing glance. She hated them for their curiosity, their complaisance.

She stooped, entered the house, sat upon a mat on the pebble floor, her back against one of the posts in the circle that upheld the eaves. Burke hurried away. The brown men were crowding into the opposite side of the hut. They dropped to stare, cross legged, knee to knee, silent or whispering, those behind craning to look. To them she seemed bold, sitting thus, the soles of her feet straight out, unmannerly in view. To her they were like animals, watching, pushing in around something they hoped to eat.

The village and its spit of land were roughly triangular. At the corner nearest the harbor several of the Pigeon of Noah's crew lounged with rifles. One of these men Burke sent to take up a sentry beat, cutting Palmyra's thatch off from the rest of the island. Another sailor, with his binoculars, watched the gunboat for suspicious activity.

Ponapé dispatched fifteen or twenty of the villagers to the easy task of hauling the schooner out of its

hiding place before the tide could ebb further. As soon as the masts—these could not be seen by the Japanese—appeared over the low mangroves next the sea, the girl would be hurried aboard in Burke's whaleboat, and the Lupé-a-Noa would away.

Ponapé now rejoined his prisoner; began a pleading. Even in her fear and physical pain, she realized how he himself must have suffered. His elation had been fleeting. His eyes were bloodshot, his gait uncertain.

"Why, Palm," he cried, "I'm so fanatic about you I ain't hardly been sober a day since that dam' kanaka got away with you. I didn't dast be."

In his wounded vanity, his bitter disappointment, his fear she was lost to him forever, it was inevitable he should have turned to drink. All his traditions demanded it; flinching, rebelling under the pain, such a one as he could have found no other defense.

For a moment the girl's heart was touched. She loathed this creature, yet she knew that, during all these days, he had been in misery; a grief, by his very limitations, made profound.

She tried to appeal to his better nature. He loved her; could he, then, do her this wrong?

But he laughed hoarsely. "I'm desperate, I tell you," he cried. "I just fair can't live without you."

The girl shuddered.

The man was half drunken, half, as he had said, fanatic. One moment he implored; the next—berated.

For it was also inevitable one so utterly self-complacent, himself so charmed with that dream of Tanna, should work back into the conviction that

Palmyra could not forever resist. By now she must regret his offer of empire. Let him but once more get her aboard the *Lupé-a-Noa*, let him but once more picture, adequately this time, the glories to come—and she would be his.

But where he had looked forward to surrender, she had met him with an automatic!

And now, realization of the truth seemed more than he could bear. The loathing in her eyes stung him, roused him gradually into fury. Finally he raged at her, threatened her with his fist until the natives clicked their tongues against their teeth in consternation.

At last, wrought to incoherence, he went muttering, lurching away, and presently Martin came to take up the watch.

Through it all Palmyra had sat as one dazed. She had, from her first awakening ashore, looked forward to some such attempt upon her. But never once had she thought of Olive being snatched away in the hour of need.

Until Burke spoke of the brown man's arrest, even she had not fathomed her dependence upon him. She saw she had never really doubted he would find a way.

But now Olive was absolutely barred.

And in acceptance of this fact the girl had had to deal with an idea that was somehow curiously novel; if she were not depending on the brown man, why then, perforce, she *was* depending on John Thurston.

With the islander free, habit, in this hour of crisis, must have turned her to him, whether or no. But now it was the white man—or none.

In this recognition her mind had gone back consciously—where it had all along been subconsciously—to that scene on the beach, with her lover springing away to his valorous charge upon the Pueliko Rocks. How gallant, how dashing he had been! He had sat his horse, snapped out his orders, like a general. And those other men had obeyed him as such.

That there were no rifles did not matter. Thurston had not known. In imagination she rode with him as he had thought to ride: defying those sinister faces peering from rock and tree; plunging in to the attack, breast bared to those spurting jets of flame.

She had seen him clatter away and she had had, through Burke's eyes, a flash of him at the end of that ride.

"I will say as John ain't no coward," Ponapé had conceded in the first amiability of his success. "He'd of et me up if he could of got to me."

There was certainly now, as she sat to face the staring natives, a something new in the girl's sense of her lover.

Yesterday she would have said he'd ride—but she had not seen him ride. She would have asserted him to be just such another man as Olive. But only as she beheld him charging inland at breakneck speed, single-handed, unarmed, to snatch her from a score of rifles, was her perception of him—until then wholly of the intellect—given life, physical being.

This change, naturally, was not all a thing of the moment.

Without being in the least aware, Palmyra, as

she returned toward normal with the passing days, had been loosening, link by link, that hysteric chain which bound her to the islander. One blow from outside, in help, and the last link would snap.

Fate's substitution of the white man for the brown was that blow.

Understanding nothing of this herself, the girl was yet conscious of realizing Thurston in a way she had not been able to realize him since Olive had carried her ashore.

In the canoe she had thought, if ever she got back out of that tomb of waters into the world of the living, she would fly to John. But upon the threshold of renewed life she had remained—manacled, helpless.

It had seemed to her that never, unto eternity, would she be free.

But now today, though she sat a prisoner, the girl suddenly became aware of liberty. With the Lupé-a-Noa soon to carry her away, she knew at last she could have given herself to John Thurston in that full faith her young heart demanded.

Palmyra had done her part. From the fetters of Ponapé Burke she had freed her soul.

It was for John Thurston to free her body.



## CHAPTER XLIX

### OLIVE TIRES OF WAITING

MEANWHILE, Olive had tired of his enforced bath.

On some islands of the South Seas the natives have a way of catching wild fowl with their hands. The bird espied upon a channel of the everglade, the sportsman gathers himself enough sprigs of green to hide his head as he swims. Then, taking water behind cover, he moves forward so slowly that the bird does not distinguish his green crown from a bog clump. Finally, swimming under water, the islander thrusts up his hand and seizes the fowl by its feet.

It was to strategy of this sort Olive turned. Cautiously he plucked leaf and spray from his screen until he had a sprangling tuft sufficient to his purpose. The five sentries along the stream, regarding their watch as futile, had soon become unobservant. The brown flood water had raised the river out among the growth on either side, and the plant life carried along would make his own floating greenery inconspicuous.

Slowly Olive began to move downstream. Scarcely did the leaves that hid his head seem to stir as they skirted the bank, blending with the leaves of the background. Past Sentry Number One, past Number Two. Finally a friendly turn of the course and he could rise, dripping, and run for the suspected mangrove trail.

Trotting through the mud, he had neared the outlander village. Then, hearing his name, he stopped, whirled around, encountered one Taruk', a member of Ponapé Burke's crew Taruk', smiling affably, emerged from the thicket and the two shook hands.

"We sit upon the island beyond," said Taruk'.

"And Palmtree?"

"Ponapé sits," said Taruk', "and his new dumb white man, and now—Palmtree."

His face beamed with friendliness. He was, it developed, an outpost. His comrade on duty had just gone back for food.

Ponapé, said Taruk', had turned crazy. Either he sulked or he raged. One sailor he had triced up by the thumbs, another shot through the leg. And once he had proposed to shoot himself. But, just when it was most interesting, he had changed his mind and taken another bottle of gin. That he had meant to seize the girl had been evident from an augmented crew. New men standing around on one another's feet, and all armed.

At mention of the hidden schooner, Olive gave a quick glance to the tide level in the swamp. Only at high water could the Pigeon of Noah be hauled out. Burke would not delay a moment.

"And shall you take Palmtree away again strongly?" inquired the admiring Taruk'.

Never had it occurred to these islanders that a brown man could cross the terrible Ponapé—and live; especially in such a thing as love. *O-lee-vay* had become a hero. Additionally, there was growing fear of the Japanese. But none dare oppose the tyrant openly, few even secretly, and some would re-

main loyal, despite abuse and danger, for the gin they could get nowhere else. *O-lee-vay* could trust this one, must avoid that. As for Taruk' himself, Ponapé had hit him with a belaying pin, and Taruk' was a proud man.

Taking him at his word, Olive ordered him back through the mangroves to summon aid. Then, followed by the awed seaman's petition for divine guidance in the attack, Olive advanced to the water's edge, there to reconnoitre.

The brown man must take desperate chances. This much only was in his favor: from the crew he could expect a timid neutrality; the six natives implicated in Palmyra's capture had, fortunately, been sent on to the schooner; and Martin—most important—did not understand the language, nor know Olive by sight.

But how, in broad daylight, elude Ponapé Burke, reach and rescue the prisoner over whom he watched?

Olive did not hesitate. The tide ebbed; he could not wait. He had no plan. But he must go on, trust to circumstance.

Burke was not visible from the mainland. Interest evidently centered at the far end of the islet. Olive waded boldly across.

The woven blinds of all the houses were raised to sun and breeze. As the brown man advanced cautiously from thatch to thatch, excitement greeted him, advanced with him.

Ponapé Burke had but just left the girl, lurched away in rage. He sat now, a hundred yards to windward, morose, half drunken, binoculars fixed upon

the gunboat; ready at first sign of danger to warn the Lupé-a-Noa back to hiding.

Olive slipped into that house third from land's end. He crouched, the central support hiding his face. A glance showed the tide was moving out. He could not await reinforcements.

Opposite, Palmyra still leaned against the post, Martin behind her, the seated natives in front.

A puff of wind sent the reef water swashing up the sand, flapped the bundled blinds under the eaves of the thatches, left them a-tremble as in an animate apprehension of coming event.

Then Olive, staking all on Burke's absorption, strolled out from shelter, grinned brazenly into the eyes of the startled sentry, entered that side of the prison house where the natives grouped. Unobtrusively, he dropped among them.

Neither the girl nor her guard noted his coming. A native more or less meant nothing.

But as Palmyra waited, with downcast gaze, her fingers working aimlessly at the hat and veil the old women had brought along, she became gradually aware that, of the brown hands on the mats before her, one wore a mitten of tattoo. Her eyes focussed into interest. And then, astonishingly, she beheld on the brown forearm a name of five letters.

A glad cry rose to her lips. But she suppressed it, drove from her face the exultation forming there. Her own salvation, this man's life, depended on her caution.

Olive sat silent, motionless, deep in thought.

The wind from the sea filled the house with click

and clack of sound; brought in off the reef the booming concussion of the surf.

The girl could not keep her eyes from Olive's face. Such her confidence, she assumed his plan worked out to the last detail. She would have been appalled to know that even now he had no more idea than she how an escape could be achieved.

His glance moved questioningly from point to point.

The islet offered no cover save a few scattered patches of shrubbery, an occasional tree. The houses, grouping along its full length, afforded little more. Open-sided shells, they provided neither nook nor corner; nothing that one could hide behind or in or under.

As Palmyra sat on the pebble floor she could look up into the dome of roof; thatch sewn upon mangrove rods supported by round timbers of breadfruit; all lashed secure by windings of sennit in patterns of tan and black. Usually in the houses of this village there would have been two or three, or even four, bales of bark *tappa* cloth lying on the central beams six feet above the floor; bales perhaps eighteen inches in thickness and no more than three feet in length.

But in this particular home there was not even so small an obstruction to the view. At the moment of Palmyra's arrival the women had had these bark cloths down for inspection. And now the *tappa*—a manufacture alien to the rest of the island—lay spread out on the pebbles in the middle of the hut; sheets as big as a bed, piled one upon another, the wind prying at their edges.

This house was furthest from the mainland: on one side the sea, upon the other a sentry who had been surprised into letting a former shipmate by, but would regard life as forfeit if he allowed the girl to pass. Ponapé Burke, a hundred yards away, might return at any moment. And the man Martin, with bludgeon and revolver, sat on the outer stones of the floor, his feet on the ground, his shoulder almost touching the post against which the prisoner leaned.

Olive's gaze was troubled as it passed from Palmyra to the sentry and on down the village path toward the shallows and the tidal swamp. Were she in the thatch at the other end of the islet, his problem would be relatively simple.

But now, all at once, the girl saw his eyes take fire. He caught his breath, grew rigid. A look formed itself, impudently daring. He shot a calculating glance at Martin, another toward Ponapé Burke. Then, for Palmyra, a slight sign of warning.

She waited, a-tremble with excitement.

And then, astonishingly, the brown man opened his mouth and spoke aloud in the native tongue—direct to Martin.

The girl was aghast.

Martin, leaning on extended arm, turned sharply toward the speaker.

Olive's expression was that of formal politeness. But, though he had seemed to address the white man, he had not done so. What he had said was this:

“Men of the village of Tanapai, listen here *unto*



me. The high lady Palmtree shall be saved. I speak the way."

Smiling urbanely he now went on, this time to one of the islanders. "Set over unto him in the tongue of the white men these words," he ordered: "Tanapai is quiet, Tanapai is humble; the coming of great foreign gentlemen is as the rising of the sun." Then, reinforcingly: "Set it over, fool!"

The native stammered, plunged into the specified translation.

Martin relaxed, smiled contemptuously.

In the Pacific the islanders forever indulge in formalities of phrase. Where one has endless leisure, one naturally gives hours to the most trivial of events. Hence, upon all occasions, there are exchanges of empty speech. These have their proper time and place. But to the white man new to the islands it seems as if someone were forever popping up with sonorities that must be listened to, however tedious.

Olive was continuing in the tones of courtesy, looking at Martin but speaking direct to the villagers. In a sentence he appealed to their cupidity, to their fear of the Japanese. Then, without alteration of voice or manner, he added for the interpreter: "Make words, make words *unto* him. Anything—that shall mean nothing and have a pleasant sound."

The interpreter had got the idea. Out came a flood of compliment to which the white man made crude response, condescendingly amiable.

The natives had already become alarmed on finding their fellowship with Burke made them accessory

to the abduction of a high, white girl. The Japanese naval administrator had been severe enough to fill them with a wholesome apprehension. Moreover, they had had Ponapé's gifts; it was Olive who now promised. And the brown man, by this audacious appearance, had become so great a hero they all wished to serve him.

Olive could thus go on, giving them sentence by sentence his plan. Alternating, the interpreter evolved additional expressions of politeness for Martin. Other men, in the spirit of the play, made formal remarks that were in reality suggestions for the plot.

And so, under the very nose of the unsuspecting Martin, almost within hearing of Burke, Olive worked out his attack.

The plan was formed. All that awaited was opportunity.

And Ponapé Burke himself gave the signal. Springing up now, he bawled across to his mate: "Ahoy—ahoy there! Haven't them dam' kanakas got the Pigeon out yet? Give a hail the moment y'sight her. These Japs is maybe up t'something."

He levelled his binoculars again upon the gunboat. Martin reached for his own, bent them upon that spot where the *Lupé-a-Noa's* topmasts must emerge from behind the taller trees.

For perhaps forty seconds both men were absorbed.

Then Martin, still seated, his shoulder against the girl's support, lowered his glasses, turned his head to speak to her.

But Palmyra was gone!

## CHAPTER L

### ROAST PORK, WELL DONE

MARTIN, failing to find the prisoner at his elbow, glanced about in an amiability that turned to surprise, alarm.

"Wh-why, where is she?" he demanded.

Outside, the sentry paced back and forth, unaware of trouble. But the white man read a something in the eyes of the natives that sent him on a run for Burke.

The moment Martin faced away Olive slipped out at the rear of the house, sought cover several thatches along the village path. The now frightened guard brought down his rifle in a half formed hostility. But, desperately incriminated, he dared not give the alarm.

"Burke!" Martin was bellowing. "Burke—the girl. She's gone!"

Ponapé came a-leap. "Gone?" He burst into a stream of oaths. "What d'y'mean gone?"

The natives insisted she had stepped out, started off among the huts when the sentry's back was turned. The sentry swore she had not left the house. In his panic he was convincing.

The villagers were uneasy; scarcely more than that. They knew the last thing Burke could afford was violence. Olive had assured them Ponapé would

rage, would threaten with his revolvers, but—he would not shoot. The natives had several old rifles and firing by either side would bring the Japs down upon him.

As Burke's prisoner could not have jumped into the sea—scarcely knee deep at the point—he must believe her somehow to have been got past his man. He was surprised the natives should conspire against him, puzzled as to their method.

"Dam' 'em," he breathed, "they've pulled some sort o' *tongafiti*. But I'll soon root her out."

At his order the crew, loading rifles, began to go through the thatches. Fortunately for Olive, Ponapé remained in the open, bawling out commands and imprecations. The search, unsystematic, was still sincere, for, though some of the brown seamen grinned behind the white men's backs, none would have dared pass the girl by. Yet the quest covered the islet without result.

As Burke's bewilderment grew, so his impatience at the stupidity of his men.

"Outside," he sneered, "there's only the cocoanut trees and she can't climb 'em. Inside there ain't no work o' God or man, except a flagpole, so bare a hiding place. And yet y'can't find her."

Stationing four pickets on the landward side of the islet so no one could wade or swim across, he sent his crew into the thatches again. Every inch of ground was covered. But still no Palmyra.

Burke became inarticulate with rage. In a furious contempt for the men, he himself went charging into the huts, scattering the villagers as before a bull.

Twice indeed, revolver in hand, he rushed into the

very house where Olive refuged. But the islander escaped notice. He had found two men of his own relationship, tied by Burke, squatting face to face against a post in the central shadow of the thatch. These he released, but one remained as if tied. Whenever Ponapé came Olive's way, Olive would retreat to this post, take the second prisoner's place. A single look might have enlightened the white man. But to an intellect dulled with drink, inflamed with anger, concentrated upon its quest of a girl in a plaid raincoat, the passing impression of two bowed figures sufficed.

It was when Ponapé Burke had stopped, completely at a loss, that a messenger came running from the *Lupé-a-Noa*. The schooner could not be got out. Diving, the natives had found under her nose two of the long hexagonal rocks from the ancient wall. The men could not understand how she had originally slipped over and in.

Burke, at this new blow, broke into a frenzy. But presently he settled to a reckless calm.

"What's one tide among friends like us and the Japs," he jeered. "We can clear tonight more secret than now. And with Olive in irons and the Orientales off up in the bush, we're safer here'n ever."

He thought the story of the rocks an invention to cover the unaccountable carelessness of his men in grounding the schooner in ebbing water; assumed she could easily, with the next tide, be floated off and out.

He would have been aghast to know that John Thurston had discovered the vessel; had reached her before the working party and while her watchman

was irresponsibly absent; had, in the brief interval afforded, made good use of his engineering skill. With a block and tackle and a light spar from the schooner, *Thurston*, in a few minutes, had undone a labor at which slaves must have sweated for days. He had tumbled two of the stones off the wall into the canal. The Pigeon would not fly again until the month's highest tides came to lift her over.

Ponapé Burke, knowing nothing of this, now called his men together. The search was to become methodical. He, with two others, would command the shore line all along toward the shallows and the mainland. The crew was to pounce upon one group of houses after another. Each three or four thatches in order were to be surprised, surrounded, their occupants herded down to the seaward end of the village and there held while the sailors worked through to the landward.

Ponapé Burke indicated four huts that stood about midway of the islet. "No, don't look," he warned. "Now, are you ready?"

At the word the armed men sprang forward. As the villagers within the four thatches caught the meaning of this unexpected charge, there was visible commotion. Then, as the foremost sailor was within a few yards of the nearest house, a figure broke from the furthest, went bounding along the path toward the outer point, carrying in its arms a heavy burden.

Burke uttered a cackle of triumph.

For, as this figure ran, there was visible over its shoulder a white straw hat, a blue veil fluttered into



view and, below, Ponapé saw the folds of a plaid raincoat.

"There, fools, there!" he screamed. "Run, dam' you; run him down."

The fugitive was of great strength. Despite the girl in his arms he rushed forward at a pace which seemed sure to win him land's end, though what he would gain thereby was not apparent.

As he ran, however, he struck his foot against a tree root, staggered; the burden was hurled from his arms to the ground. But he did not pause. With one despairing look back, he plunged on, turned at right angles, tried to make his escape into the sea where the water deepened. But two of the sailors, flanking along the beach, sprang upon him. Others joined in. A struggle, and he was held.

Ponapé Burke had remained at his post, an amused spectator. Now, however, when the girl on the ground did not stir after her fall, he ran toward her.

"Palm," he called; "Palmie, are y'hurt?"

Another hundred feet and he stopped. Bewilderment turned into rage.

For lying there in the hat, veil and raincoat was no Palmyra Tree.

It was a big, roast pig.

## CHAPTER LI

### EVIL HOUR OF PONAPÉ'S POWER

PONAPÉ BURKE turned a savage face from this greasy pork to the man who had tricked him—his prisoner. Then an oath and a laugh struggled for simultaneous expression. For there, bloody, desperate, stood the brown man Olive.

"By Gad," cried Burke at length, "I might of known from the first it was you."

Instantly sensing the islander's purpose, Ponapé raced back to his post on the landward beach, belowed at the other guards to regain theirs. Then he searched the four houses once more. Olive, seemingly, would not have been forced to such expedient had Palmyra not been there.

But again—failure. Nor, though the whole village was combed, was the girl found.

The white man's features were contorted. He rushed up to the prisoner. "Where is she?" he demanded.

Olive clamped his lips shut.

"Where is she?"

"Safe away."

"You lie. Again, where?"

The brown man shrugged

Midway of the islet, in view from most of the thatches, stood a spreading *mai* tree. Burke turned toward this. "Bring that devil along," he ordered.

“And—” significantly—“bring a line from the whaleboat.”

It had been Burke's sudden descent upon the four houses which precipitated catastrophe. The villagers, grown overconfident, had thought he would not look there again. Olive, having seen the messenger from the Pigeon of Noah, had assumed erroneously that the schooner was ready; that Ponapé, seizing the girl now, could sail at once. In desperation the brown man had snatched up the hat, veil and rain-coat; thrown these about the pig—cooked to send to the feast down the coast.

Running toward the outer end of the islet he had hoped to draw off Burke and the crew, so the villagers could rush Palmyra shoreward to safety. He would hold the pursuit by carrying the pig into the sea; perhaps himself escape if Ponapé feared the sound of firing. But, one misstep, and he had been caught before there was time to get the girl away.

Hence it was that she herself, peering tensely out, saw Olive led to the *mai* tree, his wrists bound behind him.

She saw the master in vehement demand for her surrender; Olive shake his head in defiance.

And then, with a gasp of horror, she saw Ponapé Burke toss the line over a limb of the tree; draw a noose tight about his prisoner's throat.

The villagers, crowding round Burke's guards, waited in consternation.

Ponapé turned to them. “If you would save this man's life—speak.”

But Olive, pale yet unflinching, besought their silence.

They would have been glad to have this white woman off their hands and Olive free. The Japanese could not punish their yielding to force. They wished to yield—but the will of this one being held them fast.

Presently, as they continued dumb, Burke's elementary features began to express an odd chagrin. He snapped out his warning again, but his eyes as they darted back and forth were uneasy. "I thought they'd come across," he muttered. "I sure thought they'd come across."

Strange to say he was, at the moment, less concerned for himself than for Olive. He had threatened to hang this man; he did not see how he could avoid hanging him; unexpectedly he did not want to hang him. All he wanted was Palmyra. Against his brown follower—flesh being born to treachery—he had little grudge. With the girl back aboard the Pigeon of Noah, Olive could go.

Ponapé, in truth, had always delighted in the other's courage and resourcefulness; most of all in his envied strength. And now he was surprised, vaguely troubled by a sense of fondness, heretofore unsuspected.

Burke's anger transferred itself to the villagers. After all, it was they who balked him.

"Dam' their animal eyes," he growled. "They don't want this buck kanaka o' mine hanged. I'll make a good show o' getting ready. Maybe someone'll weaken first."

Nor had he long to wait. Unnoticed, a boy had wormed into the crowd, a bit of paper folded small in his hand. His purpose was to toss the note so

Ponapé should get it, yet not know whence it came. But the urchin blundered. As the message left his fingers, Burke saw. The white man snatched up the paper, unfolded it, read:

Your sacred word to free Olive unharmed (also the others), and I give myself up. He shall not die for me. If you promise, call loudly—yes.

Burke uttered a crow of victory. Whirling toward that point from which he conceived the note to have come, he put his hands to his mouth and shouted: “No, *no* NO!”

Then he clutched the boy by the wrist. “Show me where.”

His revolver menaced; the messenger began to cry.

Scowling villagers would have interfered. But he ordered his men to cock their rifles, hold the natives back.

Then again to the boy: “Where is she? Where?”

Under the muzzle of the big weapon the urchin quailed. He was appalled at Burke’s anger. And he saw that his own people wavered. At last, therefore, he raised a trembling finger, pointed toward a group of thatches.

Olive lunged forward, almost freed himself. His hands loosed he would, it seemed, have torn this weakling limb from limb. The boy cringed, knowing not which the more to fear.

Burke, in high humor, winked evilly at his brown man. Then he jerked the lad toward the indicated houses. “Come, lead the way.”

The boy, digging his one available fist into his

eyes, haltingly brought Ponapé Burke to a hut some hundred yards landward. "In there," he whimpered.

Burke sprang under, dragged his guide with him. The house had been searched before. It was empty now.

His hand knotted upon the barrel of the revolver. He clubbed it threateningly.

The villagers had followed; squatted in a circle under the eaves to stare. They had quickly been moved to partisanship. Now that Fate had decided for them they had again, with inhuman facility, become mere spectators.

The boy had sunk to his knees in fright. "There," he wailed, pointing upward; "there."

It was the same empty underside of thatch; nothing to obstruct the view except three bundles of *tappa* cloths on the cross arms immediately overhead.

The man's scrutiny took in every detail. Then he turned and the boy was in real danger. Savage irritation had all but overborne any sense of consequence.

But the urchin still crouched pointing.

Ponapé glowered. Then suddenly his eyes opened wide, he leaped to the center of the house, stared up at the bundles of stiff bark cloth, gave one a prod with the revolver.

From within there came a gasp of pain.

From the audience a groan.

The white man burst into a jeering cackle.

He reached up, seized the bale, pulled it off into his arms. As he clutched at the outer flap of the roll, the weight slid, fell to the floor. The *tappa*



opened out and the girl was flung upon the mats; to lie like a dead body, her limbs bent double, bound by a band of cloth against her breast.

Palmyra Tree had lost the bitter fight. Ponapé Burke at last had won.

## CHAPTER LII

### JOHN TIRES OF WAITING

“So—that was it.”

For a moment Ponapé Burke leered down in triumph. Then he stooped and cut her bindings. The girl straightened out, lay sobbing.

“Like a baked potato on a plate, you in yer *tappa* jacket—and I never see you. There y’was: nothing above, nothing below, nothing around. Just all open and honest. Lord—what a trick!” He burst into an admiring roar. “That dam’ Olive. Trust *him!*”

He stood gloating.

“*Aue-e-e,*” he cried in humorous contempt of himself. “I’d forgot them *tappas* was spread out on the floor. And what a fool not t’notice they’d took part of ’em.”

He was chagrined.

“The minute Martin clapped glasses t’his eyes they doubled y’up, rolled y’up, histed y’up. And I never savvied.”

Palmyra was struggling for self control. “If you had only looked,” she began at last. “They . . .” A gasping intake of breath.

Ponapé Burke was jovial. “’Twas the shortness as counted,” he explained. “Only about three feet. I never thought o’ shutting y’up like a jackknife.”

She shuddered. The misery of that position, the fight for breath, the agony of those beams across her

neck and the small of her back! The villagers had lifted her down whenever they dared.

"As y'couldn't be got out o' that first house yer-self, the idea was t'get us all out?"

She assented wearily.

"And when we all run out looking, they carried y'into the next house and shelved you? And then on from house t'house whenever they could? Meaning a final easy sneak across from the last t'the mainland?"

She assented again.

He delighted more, it seemed, in the technique of the thing than in his own victory.

"And the pig?" he questioned. "That'll be when they had y'out t'limber up, and was caught so's they couldn't lift y'back?"

But here the girl roused herself.

"Oh, you shall not harm him," she wailed. "He would have given his life for me. You shall not, shall not murder him."

Burke's amusement tinged with evil.

"You have promised," she cried. "I have your word."

"Promised?" He laughed again. "Absolutely *not*." He was calculating his advantage. "But if I should turn that devil o' yours loose? What then? Will y'ship for Tanna, fair and square?"

She was weeping again.

"Come, come, Palmie."

She tried to speak. "You, you have no right!"

The ugly flame kindled in his eyes. He was all at once again the ruffian. He seized her by the wrist.

"Y'shall see him hanged," he said. "And then, whether or no, y'shall go t'Tanna."

He dragged her toward the tree, the natives following, tongues a-click against teeth; the traitorous boy ahead, self-important, unscourged by any sense of guilt.

At the tree Olive stood among uneasy guards, hands bound behind him, feet loosely tied, noosing hemp drawn taut across its limb.

"Look at him—yer rope round his neck," Burke reproached. "Waiting, poor sucker, for y't'set him free. This here kanaka was good enough t'die for you. But when it comes yer turn?" He laughed with brutal insinuation.

The girl sank to her knees.

An execration burst from Olive's bloody lips.

"Well? D'y'sign up? Or—shall I hist away?"

She could scarcely form the sounds. But at last she gasped out: "Let—him—go."

Olive knew not the words but he knew their meaning. "Never!" he cried. "Tell her—tell her she shall not give herself for me."

At this moment, however, there rose from the outskirts of the crowd a startled warning. "Zapanee . . . Zapanee, he come!"

Burke, with an oath, snatched up his binoculars. Three boats from the Okayama were already close. Rifles bristled.

The white man flung down the glasses, sprang toward the far side of the islet where the Lupé-a-Noa's boat lay ready. The crew ran, casting aside weapons. They scrambled into the boat, raced for the mangrove path, plunged in and swam toward the

swamp itself. The villagers, dismayed now at their own desertion of Palmyra, were caught in the contagion of fright—vanished.

But while the others ran, Ponapé Burke was carried only a step or two by the animal instinct of self-preservation. Then he stopped, started on, turned back.

Horror sat upon that visage; ludicrous, yet doubly intense by the very inadequacy of its expression.

In his last effort to seize the woman he so greatly loved, this man had taken desperate risks. Until he had her safe here on the islet, he could have expected, accepted failure. But once here, victory had seemed complete: as if she were already far at sea, no trail left behind.

He stood now blinking at her as one newly awakened, bewildered. He stared at the boats as if it were impossible to believe.

"Alone," he muttered, "I might still slip m'cable, win clear. *Alone!*"

That word stung him into life. He grew white with anger. "Y'shan't have her," he raged. "I've schemed for her, fought for her, won her. Y'shan't have her. I tell y'she's mine—mine!"

His voice was anguished in its revelation. Ponapé Burke was afraid. But his feeling for this girl so mastered him that it was physically beyond his power to abandon her.

He gazed at the enemy in a terrible agitation. What should he do to save her? What should he do?

He snatched forth the revolvers. He could battle for her. Yes, kill half a dozen of those Japs. But—to what avail? Fighting or no, he'd lose her. And

in the first case only prison walls would withhold him; but in the second she would remain on this earth alive, and he—would be dead.

He slipped the weapons back, all his being in rebellion. "Palmie," he cried, "life without y'now just ain't possible. I couldn't stand it so."

Was there no way, no way out?

He stared at her, blank, despairing. But at last, slowly, then with a rush, there swept over his face a something new. From bitter hopelessness it changed into a questioning; stricken, it yet tinged with a fearsome elation; ended in such a look as set Palmyra Tree a-tremble.

Emotion which might have exalted another countenance could only distort those features. Yet, darkly repellent, they should have shone with some dim reflection of that light which glorifies the faces of the pictured martyrs. For, as these had welcomed sacrifice in the faith that promised life eternal, so was this limited being rising to the one vague hope at which his soul could grasp in a love faltering not at the grave itself.

"I can't go on *without* you," he burst forth, "and they won't let me go on *with* you. But if I can't live, I can die—*with* you."

He broke into the old laugh.

And now, in the exaggeration of its note, Palmyra understood why it had always struck her as in some way so intimidating.

"Don't y'see, girl?" he shouted. "Don't y'see?" His voice vibrated between a body in terror, a spirit uplifted. "Olive here wasn't afraid t'die for you; them women o' Tanna could die t'be with their man.



They believed; was game t'take a chance. *They* was good game sports."

His gesture was ever more vehement.

"In this here life nobody'll let me have you. I never had a look in—never shall. But how, how I say, about what's maybe on beyond? Seems reasonable-like and just, if it's me as puts y'across, it'd be me as was give the say-so there."

He was strangely like some street evangelist, stridently emotional, exhorting unto repentance and belief.

"Otherwise, girl, I'm done. This is the only way I've got a show. Nothing t'lose; everything t'gain. I'd be yellow t'the heart if I didn't try; was afraid t'take my chance. I may draw a blank. Or, by the everlasting, I may draw—*you!*"

He leered at her in an insane triumph.

The boats, as one frantic glance told his victim, were still too far to aid. The natives all had fled. Only Olive remained; bound hand and foot, the rope from the noose dragging across the limb above.

Ponapé Burke cackled into a palsied mirth. "Tanna?" he marvelled. "And I thought Tanna a big gamble; big risks for a big stake." He was superlatively contemptuous. "But I see bigger now. It'll be the whole blame heavens where these kanakas go."

"You," he shouted out after an interval. "You, and me and—him."

Olive was writhing to sunder the sennit cords which bound his arms.

"You," cried Burke, "the best woman a man ever had; him, the best slave as ever was; me, the best

dam' man that ever broke into hell t'raise hell there."

He whipped out one of the revolvers. "If we don't weigh anchor soon, we'll have t'take some o' them Japs with us t'spoil our ship's company." He was calm now with the deadly calm of the fanatic.

"Stand by," he commanded. "Let's—put t'sea."

But instantly Olive—blood dripping from wrists torn in his struggle—hurled himself against the madman. The concussion of his bulk threw Ponapé back. The bullet which would have pierced Palmyra's brain flew harmlessly into space.

The islander, by a supreme effort, snapped his bindings. He seized the other. He crushed his master to him like a gorilla. But the hand that held the revolver was yet, for the moment, free. It flashed in, the muzzle pressed against Olive's side. The hand gripped convulsively, forced the hammer up toward its fatal blow.

But now, astonishingly, all movement ceased.

And now again, before the hammer could relax toward the safety catch, before a look almost comically of puzzlement, annoyance, could form on those faces, before the knees of the two could give way and they sink to the earth, there came in explanation of this mystery—in the second in which sound had lagged behind—the far faint report of the rifle that had laid them low.

Firing from a distance, someone had drilled Ponapé Burke through his evil heart.

But, alas, the steel bullet had not stopped, its work performed. It had crashed on through the body of the heroic brown man who fought for her.

The girl shrieked out, fell fainting.

And then, as these three lay, there came a sound of hoofs, and a muddy foam-flecked horse plunged up the village path with John Thurston.

He sprang from his saddle, flung aside the gun, caught the unconscious girl up in his arms.

## CHAPTER LIII

### BETTER MAN, BEST MAN

WHEN Palmyra Tree at last opened her eyes, she gazed up at John Thurston for a bewildered moment.

The sailors of Japan, on the one hand, the returning natives on the other, stared down at her.

She sat up sharply.

Side by side two bodies lay. Ponapé Burke had fallen in a heap. But Olive would have seemed in slumber had it not been for the terrifying little hole of the bullet.

Emotion swept over the girl again.

A naval surgeon rose from examining those two, turned toward Thurston. "Japanese rifle, American hand and eye," he smiled. "An invincible combination—yes? Pops off a brace with every shot."

Palmyra snatched herself back from John as if his touch had burned. "And it was you," she cried, rigid in horror, "you who fired? Oh," she wailed, "I cannot, cannot bear that it should have been you—you who killed Olive."

But, "Oh, no, no, no, lady," the surgeon interrupted in eager reassurance. "This native man is not dead."

She looked at that form in shuddering question.

"Bullet knocked him out a little," explained the

officer, "but it hit nothing to make this big man trouble. He will be something like when the prize-fighter gets knocked to sleep on the jaw. If we tie him into bed and sit on him, maybe we keep him there three, four days." He stooped to her level, hands on knees. "You must not get cross with Mr. Thurston," he added with smiling earnestness. "He had to shoot Olive to save Olive's life. Also yours. There was no other way."

At his first sentence Palmyra's lips had parted in a gasp of relief. Now, in the reaction, she wavered, closed her eyes dizzily, put out toward Thurston a groping hand.

John caught her to him once more to uphold her. His heart was aflame with the knowledge that that pathetic blind groping had been for *him*. With her face upturned to his, appealing, close, Thurston, in that great yearning so long denied, could not resist; would, despite the grinning audience, have kissed her again and again.

But Commander Sakamoto, of an ever tactful race, was quick with a command which forced his unwilling men to the right-about; then chased the giggling villagers home with the sword of a samurai.

A burial detail had carried Ponapé Burke forever away; Ponapé, who had staked all—and lost all.

And now men were easing Olive on to a stretcher bound aboard ship. Palmyra opened her eyes once more to discover that an unexpressive brown face was beaming upon her, in Thurston's arms, with a most expressive satisfaction. Then, as the bearers raised the burden to their shoulders, grunted in sur-

prise at its heft, a square hand faltered up to a parting salute—which was like a benediction.

Thus had she first seen the sinewy sun-browned hand with the lace mitt upon it as it came thrusting through the port of the Rainbow's cabin. On that night when the black shadow of Ponapé cast itself athwart her path, the hand had been raised, as now, as if in promise that her good genii would ever be watchful to protect and to save. The promise fulfilled, he could here at last relinquish her to John Thurston and to happiness.

*For Ponapé Burke could return no more.*

“And when,” demanded John of Palmyra on the third day after; “and when shall the wedding be?”

“The wedding,” ordained this girl, “must take place before we leave the island. I insist, for one thing, despite your protest, because I think I should always now be a little afraid—alone. But the real reason—” her voice vibrated with feeling—“is that then Olive, who saved me for you, who made it possible for me to understand, to realize my own true love: that then Olive can be your—can be *our*—best man.”

And so it was that O-lee-vay, commonly called Olive, who speaks no language known to civilized man, who eats fat pork with his fingers and anoints himself copiously with scented cocoanut oil and turmeric, stood up with John Thurston, the embodiment of civilization at its finest.

Thurston could not give his best man a stick pin for Olive seldom if ever wears a shirt.



But he could see that the islander got Ponapé Burke's swift schooner, the *Lupé-a-Noa*, trusteeed for the brown man's protection by the American mission and the Japanese navy, and manned by an already eager and worshiping crew.

THE END







